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Johanna Brenner

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1949-1999 50 YEARS

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Kira Brunner
Assistant Editor

Martin Paddio
Circulation Manager

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

There's been a lot of discussion in *MR* about the implications of "globalization." We don't intend to repeat the arguments here, but we recently received a communication that brings into focus one major aspect of this much debated issue: what it means for workers to "think globally, act locally."

In the Spring, just after the Socialist Scholars Conference, at a time when we always have a particularly interesting and varied influx of visitors to the *MR* office, among the international guests at our regular Wednesday brown-bag lunch were two representatives of the Liverpool dockers who, as many readers may know, had been engaged in a long drawn-out

(Continued on inside back cover)

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ON GENDER AND CLASS IN U.S. LABOR HISTORY

by JOHANNA BRENNER

The relationship between gender and class, central to understanding the history of the labor movement, raises important issues for Marxist analysis in general. Grappling with the complexities of this relationship forces us to confront a wide range of theoretical and practical questions. What is the connection between "material conditions" and "identity"? What role do culture, discourses, sexuality, and emotions play in shaping people's responses to their material conditions? How are the varieties of consciousness of class related to other identities and affiliations? These questions challenge us theoretically and politically, as we seek to develop a working-class politics that incorporates struggles against all forms of oppression.

We can approach these questions historically by asking how and why working-class men have, throughout the history of the labor movement, often chosen forms of trade union organization and strategies that systematically disadvantaged women workers—excluding women from their unions and, when they did organize with women, accepting, even demanding, gendered occupations and wage differentials. Feminist historians have differed in explaining this. Some have emphasized men's gendered material interests, pointing out how women's low wages shore up men's power in the home. Others have emphasized pyschological and cultural factors, exploring how cultural definitions of masculinity (what it means to be a "real" man) motivated men's actions. Rather than counterposing explana-

Johanna Brenner is coordinator of Women Studies at Portland State University.

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tions which draw on interests, emotions and culture, I want to suggest some ways to understand how they are linked.

Survival Projects

I would start with the concept of *survival projects*, the ways people group together in order to live in capitalist society. These projects take different forms, from the most narrow and individualistic modes of striving to mass collective action. Individuals may be very conscious of making strategic choices, or they may adopt them more or less unconsciously. In either case, people must enter into various kinds of affiliation to secure the basic necessities of life. These patterns of affiliation are fundamental to how individuals define the boundaries of their solidarities, how they position themselves in relation to others, how they organize a worldview, and how they develop their various definitions of self, including their gendered identities.

I want to use the notion of survival projects because it is a way of talking about material life that recognizes the importance of individuals' motives and action, while placing these in specific social and historical contexts. We can conceptualize resistance and accommodation as outcomes of a process that is simultaneously cultural, individual, psychological, collective, and social. Individuals are situated in workplaces and communities, within which they develop understandings, feelings, and intentions. Through groups, individuals try to establish some control over their situation in the labor market as well as vis a vis particular employers. And because most working-class people (in contrast to more affluent professionals and managers) cannot reproduce themselves entirely through the market, groups are also constituted by exchanges (of money and unpaid labor) outside the capitalist economy.

There is no such thing as an identity abstracted from social practice. Like other identities, gender is negotiated and renegotiated in the practices of everyday life. Strategies that working-class people adopt for economic survival within the rules of the capitalist game shape these everyday practices in fundamental ways. These survival strategies will necessarily include forms of mutual support, not only in the workplace but outside of waged work—relations of sharing and solidarity across households, in neighborhoods, in kinship and friendship networks,

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in communities, and so on. Key resources include sharing cash income, bartering services such as childcare, and sharing living space.

Although historically women have predominated in creating social networks outside the workplace, I am not at all suggesting that we should locate gender in community while class belongs at work. Rather, I am suggesting that households, survival networks (of kin, fictive kin and friends), neighborhoods, and workplaces are interrelated. Until well into the twentieth century, communal ties created a base of support for worker protest and trade union organization, as well as women's community organizing (the cooperative movement, rent strikes, and so forth). But communal ties can also be sources of ethnic and racial hostility as communities, formed through particularistic and local sharing networks, compete with each other for scarce resources (jobs, better neighborhoods, and the like).

In contemporary capitalism, personal survival networks may not be as centered within spatial communities as they once were (although this might be debated). Yet they remain crucial resources, determining the level of individual and family well-being. And, operating in a normal everyday way, they reproduce distributions of relative privilege among groups within the working class. The role that friends and kin play, for example, in facilitating access to employment is well-documented and an important source of racial and ethnic segregation in the occupational structure.

Many feminists have rightly argued that identities are multiple (one is never simply a worker) and that different identities are not lived separately. One is not a worker here, a woman there, and a person of color elsewhere. Feminist labor historians have also emphasized that women, like men, develop identities as workers. Further, while feelings mobilized by workplace-based identity, the intense commitment to a particular self-definition, have a gendered character, these feelings and commitments do not arise only from meanings of gender.

This is important to emphasize from the start. When we talk about gendered workers, we risk associating with gender the emotional components of identity in which gender "modifies" workers, as if workers' identities reflect rational calculations of material interest, while gender arises from sexuality, culture, and emotion. But workers' identities, in their many

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variations, also have unconscious and emotional components. They mobilize feelings as much as gender does. And, on the other side, gender identities, while drawing on cultural meanings and mobilizing sexuality, are constructed within material relations, relations defined by the survival strategies through which people accomplish their basic life tasks.

Cultural meanings of gender, like cultural meanings of class, are produced by men and women within group life, on and off the job. However, because the production of meaning is itself a group process, it is also intensely political. The choices that groups of people make about such matters as how to organize their survival, how to represent themselves, how to resist and where to accommodate, and who within the group has rights to what valued goods, is a product of negotiation and struggle. The outcome, therefore, reflects the different kinds and levels of resources that men and women bring into the process (as, for example, skilled craft workers, unskilled workers, legal or undocumented immigrants, married women, or single mothers).

How men and women affiliate—at work and outside it—both reflects gender identities and creates them. Group affiliations respond to a complex set of constraints and opportunities. These constraints and opportunities cannot be reduced to the operations of the capitalist economy, but neither can they be divorced from them. In what follows, I give some examples of how we might make the connection.

Sectorial Strategies and Market Competition

Workers in capitalism are pulled apart as much as (perhaps even more than) they are pushed toward collective action. The operations of the capitalist market constrain the strategies of both employers and workers and tend to reproduce particularistic group identities and exclusionary strategies. If workplace relations tend to enhance workers' recognition of their common condition, competition in the labor market tends to encourage individualistic strategies for survival. That workers have been able to overcome individualistic tendencies through unionization should not blind us to the very real difficulties and barriers that have to be faced and overcome.

An analysis of gender and strategic choices ought to take these difficulties sufficiently into account, acknowledging that

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the competitive structure of the labor market threatens to undermine solidarity and divide groups of workers from each other. Although trade unions are common strategies for countering employers, trade unions have often organized on a relatively narrow basis, hardly constituted as organizations of the working class as a whole. Organizing to secure immediate, short-run economic advantages often runs counter to organizing based on longer-run possibilities for challenging employers on a more class-wide basis. From this point of view, working men's individualistic or narrowly-based group strategies for survival may have been the source for certain kinds of masculine identities as much as a consequence of them.

The fact that male workers have adopted exclusionary and elitist attitudes toward other men and not just toward women further supports this idea. Control over a craft, for instance, required control over apprenticeship and employment. Skilled workers narrowed the potential labor pool by using many different criteria for entry into their trade: not only gender, but kinship (training only sons or close relatives), geography (city printers refusal to unionize country printers who undercut them), ethnicity, race, and so forth. Faced with employers' efforts to avoid established apprenticeship systems and to use lower-paid skilled male workers (immigrants, rural workers, etc.) to undercut their rates, craft unions followed the same exclusionary tactics, striking against the employment of non-union workers rather than attempting to unionize them. Masculinity of a certain sort (e.g., white or native-born) was produced and mobilized to delimit the areas of labor belonging to unionized men and to justify their exclusionary strategies.

In following sectorial strategies, male craft workers were not unique. Competition among workers over jobs and as members of different occupations and industries can and often does overwhelm and obscure the common interests that they have as a class. The skilled disregard the unskilled, the organized disregard the unorganized, the stronger unions disregard the weaker ones—and this happens among workers who share ethnic identity or gender as well as those who do not. Sectorial organization, narrow strategies in which some sets of workers secure their immediate economic interests even to the detriment of others, can characterize industrial as well as craft unions. (Conversely, skilled craft workers are as capable as

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industrial workers of developing very broad-based conceptions of solidarity—for example, the Knights of Labor in 1884-1887.) The point is that when we look at labor history we don't necessarily see "working-class identities" arising out of trade union organization. We may see a range of understandings, organizations, and practices within trade unions, reflecting very different conceptions of what it means to be a worker and even very different views of whether all workers belong to a "working class."

When working women have organized on the basis of craft exclusion rather than industrial organization, they have, like nineteenth-century male craft workers, adopted patronizing attitudes toward other workers and profound emotional commitments to maintaining occupational boundaries and divisions of labor in the workplace.[1] Registered nurses have been no more willing to take "less credentialed" hospital workers into their unions than male craftsmen were willing to assimilate the "lesser skilled" women workers into theirs. Unionized women teachers have often made separate contract deals with school administrations and failed to support the demands and organizing of clerical workers and teachers' aides.

If craftsmen clung to masculine craft identities rather than adopt new strategies as their industries changed and women entered their workplaces, so have women workers developed feminine craft identities embedded in particular strategies for organizing against their employers. Conflicts among women workers can look very much like those between women and men. Waitresses successfully organized along gender-segregated craft lines in the 1920s and 1930s, developing fierce commitments to an identity as female workers, doing work that was different from that of men but equally skilled. In the 1960s, they clung to these identities, and to the forms of organization that had served them so well as against a younger generation of waitresses, working under very different conditions in an expanding and reorganizing food service industry.

By the early 1970s, at the height of the feminist movement, younger waitresses turned to the courts to demand access to jobs (elite food service, bartending) that had previously been closed to women. They also sought to change union strategy, abandoning craft unionism for a more industrial mode. According to historian Dorothy Sue Cobble, older waitress leaders

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experienced this challenge as an assault on their identities as skilled craft workers as well as their leadership positions, reacting with anger and mobilizing to squelch the opposition. The highly factionalized political situation starkly counterposed strategies which otherwise might have been melded together and, preserving some of the older strategies, strengthened waitress organizing even in the new conditions.[2]

Gender Divisions of Labor and Strategic Choices

More privileged workers can choose to protect themselves on the labor market by organizing to establish or defend a racial or gendered occupational structure. But whether workers can successfully carry out this kind of strategy depends upon whether employers are willing to accommodate the particular distribution of relative privilege and upon whether marginalized groups are in a position to challenge these strategies. To understand whether and when women successfully resist, we need to consider both how they construe their interests and what resources for contestation are available to them at different times and places. We must look beyond the workplace and labor market to survival networks organized around a gendered division of labor, networks which have been and continue to be primary strategies for working people to secure their conditions of life.

Women's responsibilities for care-giving have provided resources and posed limitations. They have structured women's interests as well as their identities. On the one hand, women have used these responsibilities to successfully make claims on men and on their communities. In the past (and even today, to a certain extent), women's sharing networks enabled mothers to participate in wage work. And out of these networks women developed solidarity for political action—as community members and as trade union activists.[3]

On the other hand, care-giving responsibilities are also constraints. They hamper women's collective self-organization, especially in organizations and struggles which extend beyond the community level. Historically, the more localized and communal a working-class organization is, the easier it has been for women to participate in action and organization, to take on leadership roles, to develop their own demands and ways of representing themselves, and to contest with men. The more

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centralized, bureaucratic, and trans-local working-class organizations are, the easier it is for men to monopolize decision making and marginalize women. Limitations on women's participation were cultural (definitions of leadership, and notions of masculine authority and the role of women in the public sphere) but also material. In the first instance, care-giving responsibilities restricted women's leadership beyond the local level. Until quite recently most women union leaders and organizers were single, childless, or had grown children. But even when individual women fought their way into leadership at the regional or national level, they were isolated, lacking a collective political base.[4]

Care-giving responsibilities shaped working-class women's interests, creating potentials for both solidarity and conflict. Single women, daughters of working-class families, single mothers, and married women have adopted different survival strategies, which in turn shape their own as well as their family members' participation in work and workers' protest. Married women dependent on a male breadwinner and young single women workers living in male-headed households had very different real interests from those women workers who were sole or primary wage-earners for themselves or their families. In many instances, married women supported the efforts of predominantly young and single female workers to unionize and receive higher wages. And at times female solidarity has been built across significant divides—for instance, between married women home workers and single women factory workers.[5] On the other hand, in struggles where men have promoted their own interests at the expense of single female workers, cross-cutting alliances have sometimes undermined female solidarity, as married women have thrown their support behind the men of the community.[6]

Conflicts surfaced between married and single women workers in the electrical industry in the years immediately following the Second World War over who had more "right" to hold onto their wartime jobs. This division occurred in the context of pervasive fears about post-war unemployment, unions dominated by men numerically and politically, and a hegemonic male breadwinner ideology unchallenged by any feminist organization either inside or outside the trade unions.[7]

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Women's strategic choices are, like men's, shaped by a complex set of constraints and resources, needs and opportunities. These, again, reflect not only their position in the labor market (e.g., their levels of skill, the demand for their labor) but also how they are positioned within the communities on which they depend for their survival and how their communities are positioned in relation to others. Some of the key factors here are the degree of political support for women's claims to wage work, the degree to which women can actually rely on male breadwinners for support, and, in relation to the former, their community's norms of motherhood and womanhood. The different strategic choices of white and black women workers in one case study illuminates this point.

After the Second World War, the predominantly male unionized bartenders mobilized to drive women, who had entered bartending during the war, from the trade. Most of the white women unionists, who had in fact fought men for the right to serve liquor (previously a male preserve), did not mobilize to hold onto bartending work. But three hundred black women bartenders in Chicago launched a strong protest. Their all-black union local leadership conceded to the women, continuing to dispatch women bartenders from the hiring hall. In 1961, however, when a city ordinance banning women from bartending was finally enforced, 400 women lost their jobs. The male-dominated local (as well as the international) refused to help, so the barmaids turned to the community for support and picketed city hall. Black community newspapers ran stories sympathetic to the women; however, the ordinance was allowed to stand.[8]

Black women and white women workers pursued different strategies because discrimination in the food service industry limited black women's access to higher paid employment as waitresses at the same time that industry growth was expanding white waitresses' opportunities. Black women, although faced with opposition from black men, also had more space to assert their own "breadwinner" claims since their right to living-wage work was more supported in the black community. Where white waitresses found their main support for their identities as craft workers inside the union and the trade-union movement, black women belonged to a racially oppressed community which generated its own oppositional organizations, including black

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newspapers. Perhaps because the women bartenders' struggle focused more on the white-dominated city council than their own black union local, it was easier for the women to win community support. Although many white waitresses were also single mothers, they did not have the same sorts of community institutions to turn to and so were under more pressure to come to terms with the men in their union.

Thus, the different sources of group support for women both at and outside of work shaped the ways in which they developed gendered work identities and structured the risks they faced and the resources they had available to contest with men about what was and was not gender-appropriate work for women. White women had stronger ties to the union, fewer resources outside it than black women, and, perhaps most important, far less economic need than black women had to challenge men's attempts to define bartending as inappropriate work for women.

Politics of Struggle and Discourses of Gender

Discourses of gender were always entailed in trade union struggles, as workers sought to justify their demands to each other, to a general public, and to potential allies in the middle class. Strategies of self-representation are political choices, sometimes self-conscious, sometimes unreflective, but always choices. Differing modes of making a case are always available. How male trade unionists represented themselves or women workers shifted depending on how necessary they thought it was to appease middle-class allies and how pressured they were by their female colleagues who had a different vision of how they wished to be spoken of and seen.

For example, throughout the late nineteenth century and into the 1920s, the majority of the female factory labor force remained young and single. Male trade unionists and middle class reformers, male and female, attempted to win support for striking women workers by drawing on anxieties about young women's sexuality, an intense focus of public discourse in the period. Trying to picture factory girls as sympathetic victims, these discourses emphasized the differences between working men and women by defining women's low wages as a problem of sexual victimization (the cause of the working girl's "fall" into prostitution). When working women could make their voices

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heard, they strongly objected to this line of defense, rejecting its patronizing tone and advancing very different images. Shifting attention away from the issue of their virtue, young women strikers asserted their similarity with men, appealing for support on the ground of their breadwinner roles, their reliance on wage-earning to support themselves and their families.[9]

The process of choosing organizing strategies is both conscious and unconscious. Men and women's individual identities as workers are created, then reproduced and solidified, in daily life in informal workgroups and formal workers' organizations, producing deep commitments to ways of understanding oneself and feelings about others. Defining the boundaries of "us" and "them" is part of everyday resistance to managerial authority on the job and certainly crucial to all kinds of confrontational challenges to management. While necessary for protection, group boundaries have their own rigidities and defensive sides.

The passionate feelings that leak through the minutes of both nineteenth and twentieth century union meetings where the employment of women was discussed demonstrate that craftsmen experienced lower-waged women's entry into their workplaces as an attack on their masculinity, their sexual and social selves. The economic threat that lower-paid women workers represented was certainly real. But much more than wage levels was at stake. Women's presence also threatened the practices, feelings, and relationships through which men had constructed a culture of solidarity within their organizations.

Solidarity involves defining and maintaining group loyalties to defend against the threat of both real and imagined betrayals. Organizing against a powerful (and seductive) enemy can be frightening. Gender difference (the obsessive demarcation of masculinity) could be, and often was, mobilized to manage these anxieties. But a defensive masculinity was only one strategy, and not the only one possible. Where the turn of the century Cigar Makers' Industrial Union (CMIU) pursued exclusionary strategies and very reluctantly organized women workers into a separate and secondary section of the union, male Cuban emigres in Tampa's cigar industry, radicalized by the struggle for independence, rejected craft organization in

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favor of an anarcho-syndicalist union, La Resistencia, which sought to organize all workers throughout the city. Prominent among them were women tobacco strippers who represented over one-quarter of Resistencia's membership. Attacked as both un-American and unmanly by the CMIU, the male leadership of La Resistencia characterized the CMIU as "a barn of white livered dung hill cocks," proclaiming themselves "the voice of virile labor."[10] In the context of a politicized community and an industry where men and women labored in the same factories and received equal pay for the same work (although men tended to monopolize the most highly paid jobs), strategic choices required working men to redefine the boundaries of gendered work and the meaning of masculinity.

Periods of labor radicalism and mass struggles were the most hospitable environment for challenges to hegemonic cultural constructions of gender. The movements' radically democratic ideology encouraged claims for gender equality and respect for women as partners, not subordinates. The actual organizing and solidarity of workers in conflict with employers encouraged women workers to organize and encouraged working-class men to support them. Organized feminism, while predominantly middle-class in membership, helped working-class women to develop the language and political resources to articulate demands for political and economic equality within their trade unions and communities. (The contrast between the 1930s and earlier moments of widespread class mobilization is especially striking along these lines.)[11]

In the nineteenth century, when labor radicalism was tied to a broader political movement and goals of revolutionary change such as the vision of cooperative commonwealth at the heart of Owenite socialism in England in the 1830s and the Knights of Labor in the United States in the 1880s, women could be full members of organizations, participating not only as workers but as members of working-class communities. This was especially important because women were a numerical minority in the paid workforce. Insofar as women were included, there was at least a potential base of support for feminist ideas. At the height of their militance, and responding to pressure from women delegates (mostly textile operatives and

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shoe workers), the Knights' national convention endorsed woman suffrage in 1886.[12]

Greenwald's comparative study of conflicts over women's entry into male jobs during the First World War suggests how men's strategic choices were affected by generalized class struggle and middle-class feminist alliances with working-class organizations. In Kansas City, a city-wide and week-long general strike in support of striking men and women laundry workers preceded the introduction of women as conductors on the streetcars. A strong branch of the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) had cooperated with the union movement around the laundry strike, proving their reliability as working-class allies. When the streetcar company sought to hire women as conductors for lower pay, the Amalgamated Transit Union went out on strike, with newly hired women, demanding equal pay for equal work. Their strike won the support of the Kansas City labor movement and the WTUL. In Cleveland and Detroit, by contrast, the male dominated unions struck against the employment of women.[13]

The conditions that encouraged challenge to gender norms were not part of everyday life and organizing. Radical movements' defeat brought demoralization about the possibilities of broad-based challenges to capital, encouraging better-placed workers to fall back onto more narrow, sectorial forms of trade union organizing, and prompting others to seek more privatistic routes to economic survival.

Implications for the Present

Today the lines of conflict and solidarity between men and women workers have shifted in profound ways. The question of women's place in trade unions, of women's ability to labor and to lead, is, if certainly not settled, no longer the fundamental axis of gender relations. Forty percent of all trade union members are women, and their representation within leadership, especially in unions with large numbers of women, is growing significantly.[14] With feminism as a strong current in the trade unions, women workers have organized for new bargaining issues like comparable worth, family leave, sexual harassment policies, and to redefine the scope of trade union politics, forcing their unions to take positions on abortion rights and lesbian and gay rights.

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Unfortunately, these gains are outweighed by the sustained corporate assault against all workers' wages and working conditions. The unionized portion of the labor force is at its lowest point in fifty years, mainly because men's rates of unionization have fallen dramatically. Unions are on the defensive economically and politically. As various forces search for strategic counter-offensives, the drumbeat against "special interests" and "identity politics" has become very loud, expanding well beyond the right and the center. There is, of course, something real here: working people's distress and the concentration of wealth have become too great to ignore. However, this particular rediscovery of workers as a forgotten middle has counterposed "identity" to class politics, even holding the left responsible for the current weakness of progressive forces.[15]

Here, I think, is the new "fault line" of gender (and racial) conflict, posing the question of whether working-class institutions of struggle will adopt inclusive political strategies. Tragic losses suffered by blue-collar men threaten to overshadow, politically, the double day, the low wages, and the job insecurity faced by many working women. Broad political support for Clinton's assault on single mothers in the name of welfare reform reflects deep divisions within the working class between employed workers and chronically unemployed and underemployed workers, between married women with children and single mothers.

The history I have outlined demonstrates that how trade unions will respond to the employers' offensive depends, at least in part, on the political self-organization of marginalized groups. Declining male wages in the context of a hyper-competitive labor market, pervasive economic insecurity, and disappearing public services have destabilized the old gender order, but not in ways that clearly improve the lives of working-class women and men. Whether men will respond in a defensive reassertion of their lost male privilege depends on whether women will have the political resources to challenge men, forcing them to redefine masculinity in more egalitarian terms. In turn, how women come to define their own gendered interests depends on whether men and women together will opt for more collective rather than individualistic solutions to current dilemmas. Counterposing

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"identity" to "class" politics, therefore, is absolutely mistaken. Rather, as many movement activists and trade unionists are already doing, we have to build a coalition politics through struggles that creatively address (instead of wishfully disregarding) divisions within the working class and support (rather than undermine) the efforts of oppressed people to represent themselves, their interests, and their needs.

NOTES

1. Mary H. Blewett, *Men, Women and Work: Class, Gender, and Protest in the New England Shoe Industry, 1780-1910* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), Ch. 8, esp. pp. 242-249.
2. Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It Out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), pp. 192-200.
3. Ardis Camerion, "Bread & Roses revisted: Women's culture and working-class activism in the Lawrence strike of 1912," in *Women, Work & Protest*, ed. Ruth Milkman (Boston: Routledge, 1985); Karen Brodkin Sacks, *Organizing at Duke Medical Center* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), Ch. 5.
4. Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), Ch. 5; Carol Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), Ch. 3.
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6. Mary H. Blewett, *Men, Women & Work*, pp. 123-133.
7. Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1987), p. 145.
8. Cobble, *Dishing It Out*, Ch. 7.
9. Mary H. Blewett, *Men, Women & Work*, 284-5; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Private Eyes, Public Women: Images of Class and Sex in the Urban South, Atlanta, Georgia, 1913-1915," in *Work Engendered*, pp. 260-269.
10. Patricia A. Cooper, *Once A Cigar Maker: Men, Women and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories*, 1900-1919 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), esp. 114-117, 151-152; Nancy A. Hewitt, "'The Voice of Virile Labor': Labor Militancy, Community Solidarity, and Gender Identity among Tampa's Latin Workers, 1880-1930," in *Work Engendered*, ed. Ava Baron, pp. 142-167.
11. For a fuller discussion of this point, see Johanna Brenner & Barbara Laslett, "Gender, Social Reproduction, and Women's Self-Organization: Considering the U.S. Welfare State," *Gender & Society* 5 (1991), esp. pp. 323-327.
12. Susan Levine, *Labor's True Woman: Carpet Weavers, Industrialization, and Labor Reform in the Gilded Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), Ch. 5.
13. Maurine Weiner Greenwald, *Women, War, and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), Ch. 4, esp. pp. 172-180.
14. Cynthia Costello and Barbara Kivimae Krimgold, eds., *The American Woman*, 1996-97 (New York: W. W. Norton, 19960, p. 69.
15. See, for example, Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), and Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams* (New York: Metropolitan, 1995).

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GLOBALIZATION AND INTERNATIONALISM: HOW UP-TO-DATE IS THE *COMMUNIST MANIFESTO*?

by MICHAEL LÖWY

translated by SHANE HENRY MAGE

The *Communist Manifesto* is the best known of all writings by Marx and Engels. Indeed, with the sole exception of the Bible, no other book has been translated so often or republished so many times. But what does it have in common with the Bible? Not very much, except for the denunciation of social injustice in some of the prophetic books. Like Amos or Isaiah, Marx and Engels spoke out against the vileness of the rich and powerful and raised their voices in solidarity with the poor and humble. Like Daniel, they read the writing on the walls of the New Babylon: *Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin*: thy days are numbered. But unlike the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, they put none of their hopes upon any god, any messiah, any supreme savior: the liberation of the oppressed is to be the work of the oppressed themselves.

A century-and-a-half later, what remains of the *Communist Manifesto*? During the lifetimes of its authors, as they themselves recognized in their many prefaces for its various editions, certain of its sections and arguments had already become obsolete. Others also have become outdated enough during the present century to require critical reexamination. But the general purport of the

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Michael Löwy is the research director in sociology at the National Center of Scientific Research, Paris. He is author of *The Marxism of Che Guevara* (Monthly Review, 1972), and *On Changing the World* (Humanities Press, 1992). A shorter version of this article was originally published in *New Politics* (winter, 1998).

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document, its core, its *spirit*—and something like the "spirit" of a text does exist—have not lost their original force and vitality.

This spirit stems from its quality of being simultaneously critical and emancipatory—that is to say from the inextricable unity between analysis of capitalism and the call for the overthrow of capitalism, between examination of the class struggle and commitment to the exploited class, between clear analysis of the contradictions within bourgeois society and the revolutionary utopia of a society marked by equalitarianism and mutual solidarity, between realistic elucidation of the driving mechanisms of capitalist expansion and the moral demand to "overturn all the conditions under which the human being is despised, abandoned, diminished, enslaved."[1]

In many respects, the *Manifesto* is not merely up-to-date—it is even more relevant today than it was 150 years ago. Let us take as an example its diagnosis of *capitalist globalization.* The two young authors emphasized that capitalism had undertaken a process of unifying the world culturally and economically under it aegis: "The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood ... In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material so also in intellectual production."[2]

What is involved is not merely expansion but also *domination*: the bourgeoisie "compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image."[3] Of course, in 1848 that passage constituted an anticipation of the future rather than a simple description of contemporary reality. We have here an analysis which is *much truer* today than it was at the moment 150 years ago when the *Manifesto* was being composed.

Indeed, never until this end of the 20th century has capital succeeded in exerting such a complete, absolute, undivided, universal, and unlimited sway over the whole world. Never in the past has it had its current ability to impose its rules, its policies, its dogmas, and its interests upon all the nations of the

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globe. Never have international finance capital and multinational corporations been so out of control by states and peoples. Never before now has there existed such a dense network of international institutions—International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization—devoted to controlling, governing, and administering human life according to the strict rules of the capitalist free market and unrestricted pursuit of capitalist profitability. Finally, never in any preceding epoch have all spheres of human life—social relationships, culture, art, politics, sexuality, health, education, sports, recreation—been so completely dominated by capital, so deeply submerged in "the icy water of egotistical calculation."

Nevertheless, the brilliant—and *prophetic*—analysis of capitalist globalization sketched out in the initial pages of the *Manifesto* suffers from certain limitations, tensions, or contradictions. These do not stem from an excess of revolutionary zeal, as most critiques of Marxism contends, but, on the contrary, from an insufficiently critical stance in regard to modern bourgeois/industrial civilization. Let us look at several of the closely interlinked aspects of that stance.

1. The ideology of progress typical of the nineteenth-century show ups in the visibly *Eurocentric* way in which Marx and Engels express their admiration for the capacity of the bourgeoisie to "draw all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization": thanks to its cheap commodities "it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate" (a transparent reference to China). They seem to consider western colonial domination as an expression of the bourgeoisie's historical "civilizing" role: this class "has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West."[4] The sole restriction on this Eurocentric, not to say colonialist, distinction between "civilized" and "barbarian" nations is the phrase "what it calls civilization" (*sogennante Zivilisation*) with reference to the western bourgeois world.

In his later writing Marx was to take a much more critical stance in regard to western colonialism in India and China, but it would remain for the modern theoreticians of imperialism—Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin—to formulate a *radical* Marxist challenge to "bourgeois civilization" from the point of view of its victims, namely the colonized peoples. And only with Trot-

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sky's theory of permanent revolution would emerge the heretical idea that socialist revolutions would be most likely to begin in the periphery of the system, the dependent countries. Of course, the founder of the Red Army insisted on the additional point that unless the revolution would spread to the advanced industrial centers—notably of western Europe—it would sooner or later be condemned to failure. It is often forgotten that, in their preface to the Russian translation of the *Manifesto* (1881), Marx and Engels envisaged a hypothetical situation in which the socialist revolution would begin in Russia—on the basis of traditional peasant collectivism—and then spread to western Europe. The Russian revolution, would according to their words, become a signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other. This text—as well as a contemporary letter to Vera Zasunch—reply in advance to the supposedly "orthodox Marxist" arguments of the Kautskys and Plekhanovs against the "voluntarism" of the October Revolution of 1917—arguments that today have again become fashionable after the end of the U.S.S.R.—according to which a socialist revolution is only possible where the productive forces have reached "maturity," which is to say in the advanced capitalist countries.

2. Inspired by "free trader" optimism, and by a rather economic-determinist approach, Marx and Engels foresaw—wrongly—that "National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisies, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production, and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto."[5]

Not so, alas! The history of the twentieth-century—two World Wars and innumerable conflicts between nations—has given no confirmation at all to this forecast. It is of the incessant nature of the global expansion of capital to produce and reproduce clashes between nations, whether this be in inter-imperialist conflicts over domination of the world market, in national liberation movements against imperial oppression, or yet in myriad other forms.

Today we see, yet one more time, just how much fodder capitalist globalization provides for panic-ridden identity politics and for tribalistic nationalisms. The false universalism of the world market unleashes particularism and hardens xenophobia: the commercial cosmopolitanism of capital and the aggressive group-identity drives are mutually reinforcing.[6]

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Historical experience—notably that of Ireland and its struggle against English imperial domination—taught Marx and Engels, a few years later, that the reign of the bourgeoisie and of the capitalist market do not suppress but *intensify*—to an historically unprecedented extent—conflicts among nations. But it would await the writings of Lenin on the right of national self-determination, and those of Otto Bauer on national cultural autonomy—two approaches usually regarded as contradictory but which can at least as well be seen as complementary—for a coherent Marxist study to appear dealing with the reality of the nation, its political and cultural nature, and its relative autonomy—indeed its irreducibility—with regard to the economy.

3. Paying homage to the bourgeoisie for its unprecedented ability to develop the productive forces, Marx and Engels unreservedly celebrated the "Subjection of Nature's forces to man" and the "clearing of whole continents for cultivation" by modern bourgeois production.

Moreover, they seem to envisage the revolution as being mainly the suppression of "fetters"—the existing property-forms—which deny free growth to the productive forces created by the bourgeoisie, without asking whether there also is a need for revolutionizing the very structure of the productive forces in accordance with both ecological and social criteria.

This limitation was partially rectified by Marx in some later writings, notably *Capital*, where he takes up the simultaneous exhaustion of the soil and the labor force by the logic of capital. But it is only in recent decades, with the rise of ecosocialsim, that we have seen serious efforts to integrate the fundamental intuitions of ecology into the body of Marxian theory.

4. Inspired by what might be called the "fatalistic optimism" of progressivist ideology, Marx and Engels unhesitatingly proclaim the fall of the bourgeoises and the victory of the proletariat as 'equally inevitable." One need not dwell long on the political consequences of this vision of history as a process whose results are guaranteed by science, by the laws of history, or by the contradictions of the system. Carried to its consequences—which, of course, was not done by the authors of the *Manifesto*—this reasoning would leave no place for the subjective factor: revolutionary consciousness, organization, and initiative. If, as Plekhanov was to declare, "the victory of our

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program is as inevitable as tomorrow's sunrise," why create a political party, why struggle, why risk one's life for the cause? Nobody would dream of organizing a movement to make sure that the sun would rise tomorrow.

It is true that one passage of the *Manifesto* contradicts, at least implicitly, the "inevitablitist" conception of history: I refer to the famous second paragraph of the "Bourgeois and Proletarians" chapter, according to which every historical class struggle "each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes." Marx and Engels do not explicitly affirm that this alternative might also hold for the future, but this is a possible interpretation of that passage.

In reality, it was Rosa Luxemburg's 1915 "Junius Pamphlet" (*The Crisis of Social Democracy*) which was, for the first time, clearly to pose the alternative *socialism or barbarism* as the historic choice confronting the working-class movement and the human species. It was only at that specific moment that Marxism broke radically with any linear vision of history and with any illusion of a "guaranteed" future. And it was only in the writings of Walter Benjamin that would at last be found a critique in depth, on the basis of historical materialism, of the progressivist ideologies that disarmed the German and European working-class movement by drugging it with the illusion that is could get by merely through "swimming with the current" of history.

It would be wrong to conclude from all these critical remarks that the *Manifesto* fails to go beyond the bounds of the "progressivist" philosophy of history inherited from the Enlightenment thinkers and from Hegel. Even while hailing the bourgeoisie as a class that has revolutionized production and society and which has "accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals,"[7] Marx and Engels reject any linear vision of history. They continually emphasize that the spectacular progression of the productive forces—more impressive and colossal in bourgeois society than in all past civilizations—is bought at the cost of the degradation of the social condition of the direct producers.

This is especially the case with those analyses that take account of the decline—in terms of the quality of life and of labor—which characterizes the condition of the modern worker compared to that of the artisan and even, in certain

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respects, of the feudal serf: "The serf, in the period of serfdom, raised himself to membership in the commune ... The modern laborer, on the contrary, instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class."[8] Likewise, in the capitalist system of mechanized industry, the labor process itself becomes "repugnant"—a concept borrowed by the *Manifesto* from Fourier—it loses all autonomy "and, consequently, all charm for the workman."[9]

Here we glimpse the outline of an eminently *dialectical* conception of the historical process, in which certain types of *progress*—in terms of technology, of industry, of productivity—are accompanied by retrogression in other fields: in terms of social, cultural and ethical life. In this respect as well there is importance in the remark that the bourgeoisie "has resolved personal worth into exchange value" and has left no other bond among human beings "than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment' (*die gefühllose 'bahre Zahlung'*)."[10]

Let us add that the *Manifesto* is much more than a—sometimes prophetic, sometimes marked by the limitations of its time—diagnosis of capitalism's global power: it is also, and above all, a pressing call to *international struggle against that domination.* Marx and Engels understood perfectly well that capital, as a world system, could be vanquished only by the world-historical action of its victims, the proletariat and allied classes. Among all the phrases of the *Manifesto,* the final one is undoubtedly the most important, that one which has inspired the imaginations and the hearts of several generations of working class and socialist activists" "*Proletarier aller Länder, vereinigt euch!*" It is not by chance that this exclamation became the standard and the password for the movement's most radical tendencies over the past 150 years. It stands as a proclamation, a summons, a categorical moral and strategic imperative, which has served as a lodestar through wars, confused clashes, and heavy ideological fogs.

That appeal was also a *visionary* one. In 1848 the proletariat was still only a minority in most European societies, not to mention the rest of the world. Today, the mass of wage-workers exploited by capital—industrial workers, white-collar workers, services employees, day laborers, farmhands—comprises the majority of the world's population. It is far and away the most important force in the class struggle against the global capitalist

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system, and it is the axis around which other social forces, other social struggles can and must orient themselves.

Indeed, it is not only proletarian interests that are at stake: it is all oppressed social categories and groups—women (not very present in the *Manifesto*), nations and ethnic groups under alien domination, the unemployed and marginalized (the "pooritariat")—of all countries who have a stake in social transformation. And this without raising the question of the environment, which concerns not this or that group but the whole human species.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, some have declared the end of socialism, the end of the class struggle, even the end of history. The strike waves of recent years in France, Italy, South Korea, Brazil, the U.S.A.—indeed, everywhere in the world—have delivered a stringing rebuttal to the sort of pseudo-Hegelian speculation. But what is tragically lacking to the lower classes, on the other hand, is even the barest minimum of international coordination.[11]

For Marx and Engels, internationalism was both a centerpiece in the strategy of proletarian organizing and struggle against worldwide capital and the expression of a *revolutionary humanist ambition*, for which the emancipation of humanity was the highest moral value and the ultimate objective of the struggle. They were communist "cosmopolitans," insofar as the whole world without frontiers or national boundaries was the horizon of their thought and action as well as the content of their revolutionary utopia. *In The German Ideology*, written barely two years before the *Manifesto*, they emphasize that it is only thanks to a communist revolution, which must necessarily be a world-historical process, that every individual person "will be freed from its particular local and national limitations, brought into a practical relationship with the products (including the intellectual products) of the whole world, and enabled to gain the capacity to delight in all the fruits of worldwide human creativity."[12].

Marx and Engels did not limit themselves to extolling proletarian unity irregardless of frontiers. During a large part of their lives they endeavored to *give concrete and organized form to internationalist solidarity*. They did so, at an initial stage, by gathering German, French, and English revolutionaries in the Communist League of 1847-1848, and, later, by making a large contribution to building the International Workingmen's Association, founded in 1864. The successive Internationals—from

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the First to the Fourth—suffered from crises, from bureaucratic deformations, or from isolation. None of this kept internationalism from being one of the most powerful motive forces for liberation struggles throughout the twentieth century. In the initial years after the October Revolution of 1917, an impressive internationalist wave surged through Europe and the whole world. During the Stalinist years, this internationalism was manipulated as a tool for the great-power interests of the U.S.S.R. But even during the period of the Communist International's bureaucratic degeneration, there were genuine manifestations of internationalism, like the International Brigades of Spain from 1936 to 1938. More recently, a new generation reacquired a sense of internationalist activity, in the uprisings of the year 1968 and in actions in solidarity with Third-World revolutions. Current problems are international in scope. The challenges signified by capitalist globalization, neoliberalism, unregulated speculative financial markets, monstrous indebtedness and impoverishment of the Third World, environmental degradation, gravely menacing ecological crisis—to mention only a few examples—all call out for solutions on a global scale.

Yet we have no choice but to admit that, confronting the unification, regional (European Union) and global, of big capital, that of its adversaries has made little progress. While in the nineteenth-century the most conscious sectors of the working-class movement, organized in the International, were *in advance* of the bourgeoisie, today they are, relatively, tragically *backward.* Never has the need for international association, coordination, and common action—on the trade-union level in regard to common demands, and on the level of struggle for socialism—been so urgent, and never has the response to that need been so weak, fragile, and tentative.

All this does not mean that the movement for radical social change must not begin at the level of one, or several, nations, or that there are no legitimate national liberation movements. But contemporary struggles are, to an unprecedented degree, interdependent and interrelated from pole to pole. The only possible rational and effective answer to capitalist blackmail over delocalization and "competitiveness"—the claim that wages and social benefits must be cut in a Paris to compete in price with the products of a Bangkok—is organized and effective international working-class solidarity. Now it has become

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apparent, more clearly than in the past, just how really convergent are the interests of the workers of the North and of the South: wage increases for workers in southern Asia directly concerns European workers; the struggle of peasant farmers and indigenous peoples to protect the Brazilian rain forest from the destructive attacks of agribusiness is of pressing concern to American environmentalists; rejection of neoliberalism is common to trade-union and popular movements in all countries. Many more such examples could be given.

What sort of internationalism is here at issue? The fake "internationalism" at the service of blocs and of "guide states"—the U.S.S.R., China, Albanian, etc.—is dead and buried. It was a tool for petty national bureaucracies, who used it to give cover to whatever policies their national states happened to be following. The time has come for a new beginning that will also preserve the best of past internationalist traditions.

Here and there, the seeds of a new internationalism, independent of all states, are to be seen. Militant trade-unionists, left-wing socialists, de-Stalinized communists, undogmatic Trotskyist, unsectarian anarchists, are seeking out the paths to renewal of the proletarian internationalist tradition. A worthy initiative, though still limited to a single region, is the *Forum of São Paulo*, an arena for discussion and common action among the main forces of the Latin-American left, established in 1990, whose aims are to struggle against neoliberalism and to search out new forward paths, serving the interests and the needs of the great majority of the people.

Concurrently, new internationalist feelings are becoming visible in social movements with a global perspective, like feminism and environmentalism, in antiracist movements, in liberation theology, in associations devoted to human rights and to solidarity with the third world. All these currents are far from satisfied with existing institutions like the Socialist International which, though it does at least have the merit of existing, is too compromised with the established order.

A sampling of the most active representatives of these various tendencies, for both the North and South of the planet, came together, in a unitary and fraternal sprit, in the Intergalactic Conference for Humanity and against Neoliberalism, which in July 1996 was convened in the mountains of Chiapas, Mexico, by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation—a revolutionary move-

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ment which has been able to combine, in an original and successful way, the local (the struggle of the indigenous Indian people of Chiapas), the national (the combat for democracy in Mexico), and the international (the global struggle against neoliberalism). We have here only a first, modest, step, but one going in the right direction: the rebuilding of international solidarity.

It is plain that in this worldwide battle against capitalist globalization a decisive role is played by struggles in the advanced industrial countries, which dominate the world economy: a fundamental change in the international balance of forces is impossible without striking at the very "center" of the capitalist system. The rebirth of a combative trade-union movement in the United States is an encouraging sign, but it is in Europe that we find the most powerful movements resisting neoliberalism—even though they have yet to develop much continent-wide coordination.

It is from convergence between renewal of the socialist, anticapitalist, and anti-imperialist tradition of proletarian internationalism—ushered in by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*—and the universalist, humanist, libertarian, environmentalist, feminist, and democratic aspirations of the new social movements that can and will arise twenty-first-century internationalism.

NOTES

1. Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, Paris 1971, p.81.
2. Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Monthly Review, 1998), pp. 21-22.
3. ibid. p. 22.
4. *Manifesto*, p. 22. For a discussion in depth of this problem area, I refer to Nestor Kohan's excellent text "Marx en su trec mundo," *Casa delas Americas*, 207, April-June 1977.
5. *Manifesto*, p.40. This affirmation of the *Manifesto* is particularly contradicted several lines further on, where the authors seem to link the end of national antagonisms to that of capitalism: "In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between class within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end."
6. I here take as my own the analyses of Daniel Bensaid in his remarkable book *Le Pari Mélancolique* (*The Melancholic Wager*) (Paris, Fayard, 1997).
7. *Manifesto*, p. 21.
8. ibid, p. 31.
9. ibid., p.25.
10. ibid., p.20.

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11. Eight years after the fall of the Wall, what do the Germans themselves think about this subject? Do they believe that "today, the class struggle is outmoded, Employers and employees ought to relate to each others as partners," or rather do they hold that "it is right to speak of the class struggle. Basically, employers and employees have totally incompatible interests?" Here is an interesting opinion poll, published on December 10, 1997, by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a newspaper scarcely to be accused of sympathizing with Marxism: although in 1980 some 58% of West-German citizens chose the former answer against 25% for the latter, by 1997 the balance had been reversed: some 41% still considering the class struggle to be outmoded, but 44% thinking it to be on the agenda. In the former GDR—that is, among the very people who overturned the Berlin Wall—the majority is strikingly clearer: 58% of adherents to class struggle against 26%! (cf. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, n.526, January 1998, p.8).
12. Marx and Engels, *L'Idéologie Allemande*, Paris, Editions Sociales, 1968, p.67.

(Continued from inside back cover)

can, in effect, refuse to cross a picket line thousands of miles away by refusing to unload any ships implicated in the conflict. (The "wharfies" in Australia, whose struggle is discussed in this issue, also garnered international support.) But even granted the very specific conditions of dockers, they clearly have much to say to other workers about the necessity and possibility of international solidarity. And their experience speaks volumes about the continuing, and growing, importance of trade unions, not despite but because of "globalization."

But this is only one side of the formula, "think globally, act locally." In our preoccupation with "globalization," we may forget the other side. The dockers and their supporters were, and are, displaying international solidarity in fruitful and innovative ways. At the same time, however much they relied on support from workers at the other end of the world, their struggle was a local one, against not only their particular employer but also against their national state, the state that had brought them the "free market" and neoliberalism in a very concretely national form, Thatcherism and its successors (including "New Labour"), the state that had imposed the anti-union legislation which had compelled them to break the law in order to carry on their struggle, and so on.

The global integration of the economy is, always and everywhere, experienced by workers locally and is, always and everywhere, mediated by their national states. "Globalization," in fact, is constituted by, and couldn't exist without, a complex of national policies implemented by national states (this is, by the way, something that we're finding out in unexpected ways, as some of its most avid participants retreat to their national bunkers in the face of global crisis, and even the *Financial Times* considers the virtues of capital controls). The point is simply that there's still much scope, in some ways more than ever, for acting locally and nationally against the forces of global capitalism.

We would like to inform you about a book party for *A New Labor Movement for the New Century*, with Larry Adams, May Chen, Greg Mantsios, and others. Join us at the Brecht Forum, 122 West 27th St., 10th Fl, New York City, Friday December 4 at 6:30 (food and beverage available).

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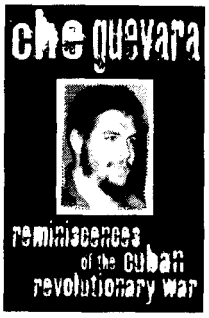

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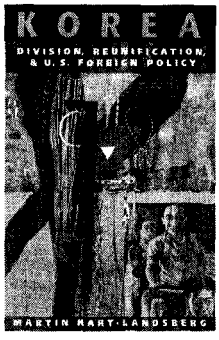

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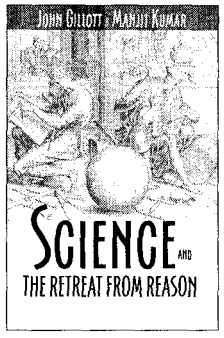

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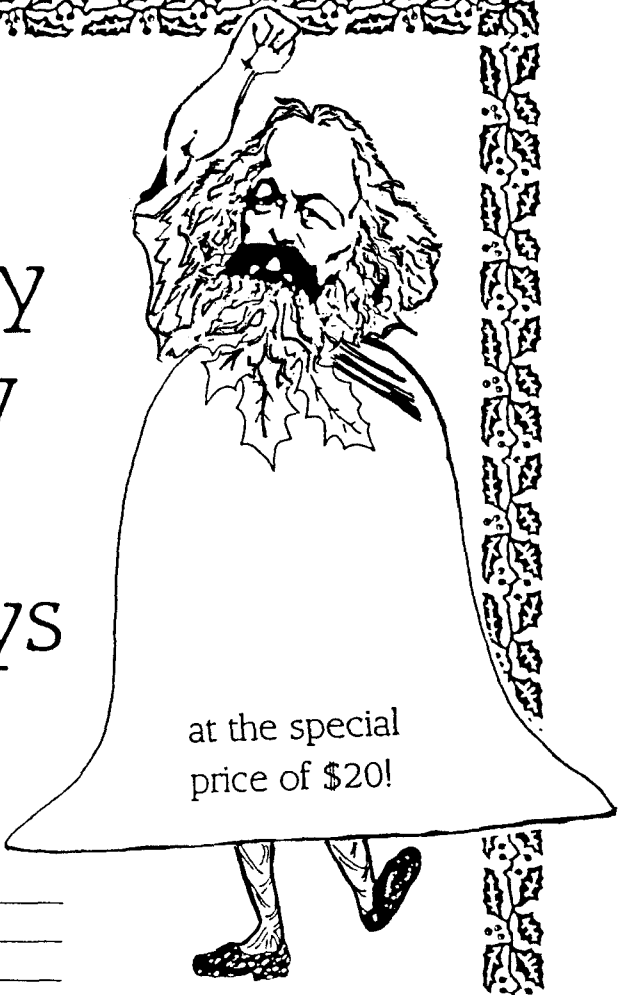

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RURAL REACTION AND WAR ON THE WATERFRONT IN AUSTRALIA

by RICK KUHN

It wasn't the usual forest fires or cuddly marsupials that put Australia briefly into the news around the world in mid 1998. Two events, unlike the bushfires or koala capers, illustrated the increasing tensions in Australian politics.

On Saturday June 13, the racist One Nation Party received almost a quarter of the votes in the Queensland State elections and entered the State Parliament for the first time. The Party was less than two years old, but polled better than any "minor" party in the whole post-war period. One Nation's success shifted the spectrum in electoral politics sharply to the right. The dominant political forces in Australia, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) but especially the conservative Coalition of the Liberal and rurally based National Parties were very worried. They may have been relieved by the results of the federal election on October 3, when One Nation's momentum dropped, but that relief may be misplaced. The conditions that gave rise to the Party and its Queensland success not only remain, but will deepen as the Australian economy moves into recession.

During the Queensland election campaign, the endgame of the "war on the waterfront," the largest industrial confrontation since the late 1960s was being played out. It began when

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Rick Kuhn teaches political science at the Australian National University in Canberra. He is a labor movement activist and editor with Tom O'Lincoln of *Class and Class Conflict in Australia* (Melbourne: Longman, 1996). He would like to thank Jack Barbalet, John Berg, Tom Bramble, Diane Fieldes, Mary Gorman, Harry Magdoff, Tanya McConvell, and Ellen Meiksins Wood for their valuable encouragement, ideas or criticism in the preparation of this article.

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hundreds of private security guards wearing balaclavas and accompanied by savage dogs took over Patrick Stevedores' port facilities across Australia. They rounded up the wharfies (longshoremen) and expelled them from the docks. The entire Patrick waterfront workforce of 2100, all unionists, was sacked. This successful, military-style operation was supposed to be the masterstroke in the conservative Australian Government's campaign to undermine the union movement. But mass picketing, widespread support for the wharfies and the threat of escalating industrial conflict influenced a court decision to reinstate the sacked workers.

The Hanson phenomenon and the war on the waterfront are both expressions of rising class contradictions in Australia. Both were responses to the Australian experience of global economic crisis since the mid 1970s and neo-liberal economic policies. And the preconditions for both matured but were, temporarily, papered over by the Hawke and Keating ALP governments between 1983 and 1996. Tensions escalated and burst into the open after the conservative Coalition Government of John Howard took office in 1996.

Resurgent Racism

Shortly before the March 1996 federal elections, the Liberal Party disendorsed its candidate for a safe Labor Party seat in Queensland. Pauline Hanson had made a series of racist statements against Aborigines (Australia's indigenous population) and Asians. The election saw a massive setback for the ALP and ended its record "long decade" in office.

In Government, the Coalition's first priority was to stir up racist sentiment. The new Ministers mounted a sustained campaign against the so-called "Aboriginal industry," policies and organizations which acknowledged the oppression of indigenous Australians.

On all significant measures of well-being, Aborigines are at the bottom of the heap. Their lives are 15 to 20 years shorter than other Australians. They are sicker, though low levels of public health spending on Aborigines doesn't reflect this. While a third of Aborigines complete secondary schooling, the national average is over three quarters. About eight per cent of the whole Australian labour force is unemployed, around a quarter of Aborigines are. Aborigines are 15 times

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more likely to be caught up in the criminal justice system, including jails, than the rest of the population.

There were two related motives behind the Government's racist campaign. The first was to prepare for new legislation on Aboriginal landrights. The second involved a political strategy.

The violent expropriation of the continent by Europeans since 1788, has been consistently challenged by Aboriginal groups and organizations. Since the 1960s, Aboriginal campaigns for land, supported by sections of the labor movement and especially its socialist left wing, prompted some legislative concessions from federal and a few State governments. The landrights situation changed when the High Court (Australia's constitutional and highest appeal court) brought down its decision on the Murray Islanders or Mabo case, in 1992. This overturned the whole legal basis for the dispossession of Aboriginal people. But the Keating ALP Government legislated, in 1993, to restrict the new possibilities for a minority of Aboriginal groups to establish "native title" claims, by narrowing the implications of the High Court decision. The Government was worried about the decision's economic and electoral implications, as landrights gave Aboriginal people greater scope to influence mining and pastoral developments.

In 1996, the High Court ruled in the Wik case that, despite the Mabo legislation, native title could still co-exist with pastoral leases. The peak rural industry lobby, the National Farmers' Federation (NFF), and the Coalition Parties, especially the Nationals, ran scare campaigns against the Mabo and Wik decisions. They denounced the ALP's legislation as too weak. With no regard for the truth, they asserted that no one was safe; that Aborigines could lay claim to anyone's back yard. The new Coalition Government's efforts to whip up anti-Aboriginal racism were therefore a continuation of a campaign that had been going on for four years.

Landrights was also a convenient hook on which to hang a "wedge" strategy drawn from the Republican Party in the USA. The issue helped shift the lines of political cleavage from class to race. There was nothing wrong, Government Ministers claimed, with people expressing concern about programs to raise the living conditions, educational and health standards of Aborigines. Nor should discussion of the economic and cultural implications of Asian immigration to Australia be "suppressed."

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Hanson's appeal

The landslide defeat of the ALP in 1996 tumbled Pauline Hanson into the House of Representatives as an independent. She was well aware that she had galvanised support on the basis of her racism and hostility to the Labor Party's economic rationalism (the Australia term for neo-liberalism). These issues have been her stocks in trade ever since. Her maiden speech was the most racist tirade heard in Parliament for decades. But it drew on a long and entrenched tradition going back to the European invasion, genocidal policies against Aborigines which continued until recently, colonial anti-Chinese legislation and the "white Australia policy" that governed immigration from Federation in 1901 to the 1970s.

Hanson blamed economic and social problems on racial minorities and big business. She denounced a "reverse racism" that supposedly dominates public policy and favours Aborigines over "mainstream Australians." She appealed to prejudices about Asians, who "have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate." Australia, she said, is "in danger of being swamped by Asians." Hanson also drew attention to the consequences of unemployment and called on the Government to "stop kowtowing to financial markets, international organizations, world bankers, investment companies and big business people."

Although the Liberal Party had expelled her, Howard defended Hanson. He gave credibility to the argument that she, far from being a vicious racist, was a victim of "political correctness." Other conservatives and some business figures were more critical. Their main argument was that Hanson's anti-Asian stance damaged trade. For two and a half years, Howard maintained that the best way to deal with Hanson was to ignore her.

Nor did Hanson have to reinvent racist paranoia about immigration. Both the ALP and the conservative parties had contributed to a racist moral panic about Vietnamese "boat people" in the late 1970s and early 1980s. During the 1980s, the Labor Party Government built a concentration camp in remote north-western Australia to accommodate Asian asylum seekers while their cases were being assessed.

Hanson has insisted on zero net immigration and that migrants are parasitic. But, in office, both the ALP and the

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conservatives cut immigration quotas and implemented waiting periods before migrants could use social services.

In April 1997 Hanson established her own national organization, "Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party." She has been the organization's key human asset. Her image, often literally wrapped in the Australian flag, is central to One Nation's advertising. She and some supporters wrote a book, whose most notorious and bizarre claim was that Aborigines were cannibals and even ate their own children. Alongside the racism, Hanson continued to address economic issues, arguing that "The bipartisan support of economic theories has resulted in the loss of many Australian jobs to our overseas competitors and our manufacturing base has been seriously reduced ... Deregulation has destroyed many small businesses which find themselves being crushed between big business and big government." Such statements reflect concrete petty bourgeois concerns with the consequences of capitalist globalization and economic crisis, without providing clear or coherent analyses of or solutions to the underlying problems. Hanson is a well-off small business woman, who ran a fish and chips shop before going into Parliament. Most of the One Nation candidates in the Queensland election had similar small business backgrounds. But Hanson also addressed concerns felt by most Australians, who are worse off today than a decade ago, in terms of income levels, pressure at work, economic security or access to free education, health and welfare services.

With the support of the leadership of the union movement, the Labor Party governments after 1983 had introduced a series of neo-liberal reforms. They opened up the financial sector to greater international competition and floated the Australian dollar. Quota protection and tariffs levels were reduced. At the same time, the ALP cut public service staffing, welfare eligibility and ended free university education. The ALP "corporatized" and/or sold off a number of publicly owned business enterprises. With the crucial exception of industrial relations, which is considered below, Labor's drive to increase international competitiveness very much followed the OECD prescriptions. After taking office in 1996, the Coalition continued these policies at a faster pace. In neither case, however, did the restructuring embody a "let the market rip" approach. Large enterprises received large subsidies and concessions to ease the

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pain of restructuring. The state continued to play a role in shaping industry development, but the tools it used to influence the pattern of capital accumulation changed.

Reforms of government departments and authorities led to the "rationalization" of services. This hit rural areas particularly hard as offices were closed down in many country towns, where deregulated banks often shut branches too. Smaller rural producers were particularly affected by the progressive removal of measures which guaranteed the domestic market to local goods.

The Labor Party acted on free-trade rhetoric much more decisively than the previous conservative government. But there were advantages to being in opposition. Tom O'Lincoln has pointed out how the hard hit non-urban petty bourgeoisie could nurture hopes that when "their" Party, the Nationals, were back in government things would be better. The NFF encouraged illusions in the Coalition. Rural capital, which produces a disproportionate share of farm output, is the main influence in the NFF, although most farms are relatively small, family run operations.

The crunch came after the Coalition won the 1996 election. The conservatives continued the process of neo-liberal reform and exposing the rural sector to competition, notably by opening up the domestic market to imported sugar. During the Queensland election campaign, a significant issue in some electorates was pork imports from Canada. The elimination of tens of thousands of public service jobs during the Coalition's first year in office, part privatization of Telstra (the publicly owned telecommunications corporation) and the privatization of the Commonwealth Employment Service resulted in more branch closures in country towns. Nor, of course, was the Coalition able to wave a magic wand to improve international prices of rural commodities.

One Nation's organising drive was most successful in rural areas—"the bush"—and, to some extent, on the outskirts of large urban centres. There is, however, a great deal of potential for One Nation in Australia's cities. They have a vastly larger population than the bush, many more petty bourgeois suffering economic problems and a large pool of unorganised and unemployed workers. But, from the start, One Nation's public meetings in larger cities were met with big, noisy and sometimes

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militant demonstrations. Although often initiated by small socialist groups, these rallies and pickets attracted a wide layer of people from the union movement, migrant and Aboriginal communities and the ALP. The protests have been extremely effective in intimidating people with vaguely racist ideas and unsystematic sympathies for Hanson from attending One Nation gatherings. By late 1997, Hanson's star seemed to be on the wane.

Thanks to the anti-racist movement, therefore, One Nation's successes have been confined to country areas, where racism is strong, the union movement is weaker, there is no socialist presence and, in parts of New South Wales and Queensland, the outright fascist and anti-semitic League of Rights has had a small base for decades.

Let down by the Coalition and relatively unopposed by anti-racist activists on the ground, many National Party supporters (and some former Liberal and ALP voters) turned to One Nation. The new party appealed to fears of unemployment and bankruptcy as well as racist traditions, which have been relegitimised by Howard. But the conservatives' concerns about exports meant that they were far less consistent racists than Hanson: "the race card [was] trumped by One Nation." Law and order tub-thumping, combined with demands for an abandonment of the Howard Government's tighter gun laws appealed particularly to this constituency too.

The economic goals and policies of One Nation are extremely simple. There are three components: opposition to foreign ownership, support for the restoration of tariff barriers and calls for low interest loans to small business, a standard right wing populist and fascist panacea. The policies certainly can't solve Australia's economic problems. A serious attempt to implement them would lower living standards and create illusions of common interests between bosses and workers.

Hanson has voiced support for unionism ... as a barrier to "Asianization." But she backed the Coalition's new, anti-union industrial relations legislation and its efforts to exclude small business from unfair dismissal laws.

In April and May 1998 national attention was focussed on efforts to smash the wharfies and the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) and, so the NFF and Government argued, dramatically improve the lot of Australians in rural areas. Hanson had nothing notable to say about the waterfront dispute. Her racism

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points away from class struggle as an effective response to economic rationalism.

One Nation's spectacular successes in Queensland came just as the efforts to scapegoat the wharfies for Australia's economic problems were ending in a humiliating defeat for Patrick and the Government. But the union movement, weakened by years of collaboration with Labor Party Governments, and still less the ALP itself were not in a position to constitute an alternative pole of attraction for right wing sections of the rural population alienated from the Coalition. One Nation's right wing populism, on the other hand, succeeded in pulling this section of the conservative electorate further to the right, hence the Queensland election result, a tremendous spring board for Hanson's national aspirations. The rise of One Nation is shaping up to be the biggest shake up of the Australian party system since the 1950s.

The Coalition's capitalist backers and the financial press are worried about the hostility to economic rationalism One Nation has tapped. When the economics editor of Australia's financial newspaper argued the "Folly of appeasing Hanson," he didn't mean her racist policies. He and big business were afraid the Government would back away from "economic reform," that is, measures that would benefit them and hurt workers and small business. They were insistent that the introduction of a regressive Goods and Services Tax (GST, a value-added tax) should remain a Government priority. The Prime Minister agreed. A tax reform package was the centre-piece of the conservatives' campaign for the October 3 federal election.

In the federal poll, One Nation did not sustain the level of electoral support apparent in the Queensland elections, even in that State, and failed to gain a single seat in the House of Representatives. But with more than eight per cent of the vote, the Party confirmed its national influence and, thanks to its 14.5 per cent support in Queensland, won a seat in the Senate. One Nation preferences also helped the governing Coalition achieve its narrow victory. Hanson's Party may now decline and could even fly apart. It is still unstable and plagued by personal bickering and political tensions amongst the disillusioned conservatives, populists, fascists and plain opportunists who are leaders at different levels. But One Nation has given a right wing cadre some experience of organising and mass work. Hanson

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has demonstrated the potential for racist populism in Australia and, as the Government continues with "economic reform" and the local economy experiences the world recession, the opportunities for these politics will expand.

Industrial relations

The assault on the wharfies would have been inconceivable without changes in industrial relations under the Labor Party governments before 1996. In 1982, fifty per cent of workers were members of trade unions. The union movement's industrial strength and a much broader popular acceptance of the role of unions in Australia than the USA, meant that significant wage cutting and economic reform could only take place with the support of union leaders. The ALP came to office in 1983, at the bottom of a recession, promising to "maintain wages over time" and to overcome unemployment. The centre piece of these governments' approach to industrial relations and strategy for economic management was an incomes policy embodied in an agreement with the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU, the equivalent of the AFL-CIO), called the Prices and Incomes Accord or just "the Accord." Under this arrangement wage fixing became highly centralised. Union leaders delivered wage restraint and industrial peace in return for an increase in their own say in public policy. Union officials were represented on a large number of statutory and consultative bodies.

The consequences of these reforms for workers were less than impressive. Centralised wages bargaining undermined shop floor organization and the union movement's capacity to mobilise. Unions which opposed the strategy were coerced into line or, in the case of the industrially militant Builders Labourers' Federation, destroyed by joint action of governments, the ACTU and other unions. In 1989-90, with tacit ACTU support, the ALP federal Government used the Air Force to guarantee the defeat of a strike over wages by airline pilots.

Real wages fell under the ALP during the 1980s: the first time that this had occurred in the recovery stage of the business cycle in Australia. Then, from the late 1980s, the ACTU went along with a radical decentralization of wage negotiations, in the form of "Enterprise Bargaining," which undermined the

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union movement's capacity to conduct industry wide campaigns.

Nor did the ALP deliver on its promises to overcome unemployment. The pattern of unemployment in Australia over the past decade and a half has not been much different from other developed countries. During the recovery of the mid 1990s, it was around eight per cent, higher than the level during the recovery of the mid 1980s.

By 1996 the proportion of unionists in the workforce was only 35 per cent and the absolute number of union members had also fallen. Rank and file morale and organization had withered. To employers and the Coalition, the way seemed open for an effective strategy of undermining working class organization through sharp confrontation rather than cooptation.

Prime Minister John Howard wanted a historic shift in relations between capital and labor, like Ronald Reagan's destruction of PATCO in 1981 or Margaret Thatcher's victory over the Miners Union in 1985. In the 1996 election campaign, Howard promised that a new conservative government would encourage closer, trusting relations between employers and their employees, by making it possible for them to communicate directly, without the interference of "third parties," and that no workers would be worse off. The troublesome "third parties" were, of course, trade unions. The Coalition parties, the NFF and stevedoring companies had been complaining about the wharfies for years. The conservatives' industrial relations statements before and after the election specifically attacked the MUA, as a symbol of the whole union movement.

The Howard Government's legislative means to harmony between employers and employees, the Workplace Relations Act (WRA), came into effect at the end of 1996. Both the Coalition and employers thought this would be a decisive weapon against organized workers, pay and conditions. The Act dramatically reduced the role of the Industrial Relations Commission and the system of awards (legally enforcible decisions) over which it presided. Labor's industrial relations reform had already made non-union collective agreements possible. Procedures for implementing these as well as individual contracts between bosses and workers were now simplified.

The Coalition Government continued to focus particularly on the wharfies, a tough and therefore important target. From

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the mid 1930s, under the leadership of Communists, they had rebuilt their union and developed strong traditions of branch and workplace democracy and of political engagement. Thanks to their industrial militancy, the wharfies achieved dramatic improvements in job security and pay. The "bull system," where wharfies were picked up for work by foremen on a daily or twice daily basis, was abolished during World War II. Waterside workers imposed a closed union shop in many ports, including the largest. Today they are amongst the best paid semi-skilled workers in the country. Their record of solidarity dates back to the 1930s. Wharfies took industrial action against the Japanese occupation of China in 1938, Dutch efforts to reconquer Indonesia in the late 1940s and Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.They also provided funds for the Aboriginal movement and banned the export of enriched uranium ore in the 1970s. So, on both political and economic grounds, employers and the Government were keen to break the wharfies and their union.

War on the waterfront

During 1997, the Government and Patrick management began to conspire over practical plans to smash the MUA. A successful operation would demoralise the whole union movement. The campaign against the wharfies was particularly popular in rural areas. The Government and NFF maintained that, if only ports were more efficient, Australia's exports would flourish and farmers' incomes improve. It is, however, a particularly tenuous chain of argument from lower costs in moving containers (as opposed to bulk handling) to lower charges to freight operators, to higher prices for wholesalers to better prices for farmers. Breaking the MUA would undoubtedly increase profits. But the main beneficiaries would be the stevedoring, freight, shipping companies and agribusiness, rather than small rural producers.

The Government encouraged a series of attempts to undermine the MUA. In September 1997, International Purveyors locked out its unionised workforce in the small port of Cairns in north Queensland. The Government applauded. But, when the London-based International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) threatened to boycott the company around the world, it backed off.

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Patrick Stevedores funded a covert attempt to train scab wharfies—in Dubai—in December 1997. A contractor made special efforts to recruit current and former Special Air Services commandos for this adventure. International solidarity again delivered an important victory. The ITF threatened a global boycott of ships using United Arab Emirates ports. This scab training operation was quickly terminated. Then, in late January 1998, Patrick management excluded unionists from its Webb Dock facilities so scabs could be trained there. When they were deemed ready, on April 7, the assault on the MUA began. The entire Patrick labor force on the waterfront was sacked.

The Union set up mass pickets of Patrick docks across the country immediately. The wharfies were joined by workers from other industries. For example, the Australian Capital Territory Trades and Labor Council and branch of the large Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union bussed unionists from landlocked Canberra to the Sydney wharves, three hours drive away.

Militant and effective pickets of One Nation meetings had been all over the TV news recently. The precedent gave the wharfies' pickets credibility as a sensible response to the lockout.

Most union officials had done little to mobilise their members in struggles under the Hawke and Keating Governments. In the face of the assault on the wharfies, however, the union bureaucracy recognised that the future of unionism and their own jobs were at stake. Top officials from the ACTU and a series of larger, left wing unions issued statements, leaflets and articles, donated funds, organised collections and rallies and themselves attended the picket lines.

Workers are Labor's core constituency. They make up a much larger proportion of voters for the ALP than for other parties. They are represented, indirectly, inside the Party through affiliated unions. And they are members (though a declining proportion) of the Party. So clear were the implications of the waterfront dispute that even senior Labor Party figures, including current and former State and federal leaders visited the pickets.

The most important response, however, came from rank and file unionists who saw the attempt to smash the MUA as a prelude to assaults on all organised workers. There were big

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rallies and demonstrations across the country. Large numbers made financial contributions to sustain the sacked wharfies and joined the picket lines.

Early on the morning of April 18, two hundred police attempted to clear a path to the Melbourne waterfront through two thousand picketers. Around 8:00 am, senior police suddenly informed the picketers that they were reconsidering their position, when over one thousand construction workers appeared behind them. They had marched off city sites, in response to a call from their union and the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. State Police Commissioners were getting worried. They issued a joint statement calling for a negotiated settlement to the dispute.

Meanwhile the level of support for the wharfies was increasing. When police were not on the offensive, there was sometimes a carnival atmosphere on picket lines, with concerts, rallies, fundraising and visiting delegations. On April 22, the MUA organised a solidarity breakfast on the picket line for women supporters in Melbourne. While few women work on the docks, women were prominent in the fight to defend the union.

The mobilizations in support of the wharfies were largest in Melbourne. Between 75 thousand and 100 thousand people struck and marched through the city centre on May 6 in solidarity with the MUA. Many militants also took time off to attend the picket lines. On returning to work, their reports found eager audiences.

Support for the picket lines and solidarity from other workers in Australia were the decisive factor in the wharfies' success. But workers in other countries played a very important role by placing pressure on the Howard Government and companies whose ships were loaded in Australia by scabs. Japanese, South African, New Guinea, Indian and US dockers' unions banned ships loaded by Patrick. In taking their action, the Papua New Guinea Maritime Workers Industrial Union and South African Transport and General Workers' Union referred to the support given to their industrial and anti-apartheid struggles by the MUA.

Unionists and other supporters of Australian wharfies protested against the attack on union rights in demonstrations outside or messages to Australian embassies in Tokyo, Welling-

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ton, London, New Delhi, Bangkok, Manila, Seoul, Singapore and Jakarta, where a then illegal union also threatened industrial action.

Eventually, with large scale police intervention, the most conservative State governments, in Queensland and Western Australia, were able to break the picket lines in Brisbane and, briefly, Fremantle. But cargo continued to mount up in most ports. And more and more vessels had to stand off-shore waiting for a berth.

The MUA also took legal action against Patrick. The union argued that Patrick and Government officials, motivated by a desire to discriminate against unionists, had entered into a conspiracy and even breached the Government's tailor-made Workplace Relations Act.

Against a background of mounting industrial action and rising social conflict, a Federal Court judge ordered on April 21 that the wharfies be reinstated while the case was heard. Over the following two weeks, two further courts rejected Patrick's appeals against the ruling. The full Federal Court's decision was televised live, an unprecedented media event. The Government/employer strategy for a sharp, hard campaign against the MUA was in tatters.

The deal which resolved the dispute on 15 June, was not a complete triumph for the wharfies. The MUA agreed to accept the Government's productivity targets, the loss of 700 jobs and the contracting out of ancillary and maintenance services. Workers performing these services would, however, remain unionised. This was, nevertheless, an extremely important defensive victory. The most determined attack on the union movement since the 1930s had failed. Patrick and its customers had lost tens of millions of dollars.

Both the Government and Patrick management soon lost even more credibility, as their involvement in various cloak and dagger operations came out. Former scab workers complained about the raw deal they got when they were sacked. The value of union membership and the risks involved in scabbing were very obvious.

The union movement had demonstrated that it was capable of defending its members, the best means of recruiting. The campaign to defend the wharfies boosted the morale of activists and militants and added conviction to arguments

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elsewhere that it is possible to fight and win, even against determined governments and bosses.

Alternatives to "economic rationalism'

Pressures from capital for lower wages, speedups, reduced conditions and cuts in health, education and welfare expenditure can only continue. The polarization in Australian politics indicates that two kinds of responses are possible to the economic rationalism of the mainstream parties and to the competition and economic crisis that drive it.

The right wing populist variant, responding to symptoms and attacking scapegoats, points in the direction of fascism. Hanson's racist politics is incapable of challenging the logic of capital accumulation. The more influence her movement gains, the more her approach will threaten the destruction of the labor movement, as racist measures weaken working class solidarity, while failing to solve the economic problems of the petty bourgeoisie.

But there is an alternative to Hanson, just as there is to Le Pen in France, Haider in Austria, the BJP in India and other fascist or racist-populist movements. The campaign to defend Australian wharfies found allies in large numbers of Australian workers and amongst unionists in the shipping industry around the world. It both gained support from and inspired activists in the landrights movement and the campaign against Hanson in Australia.

Neo-liberalism and racism can be successfully challenged from below, and the workers' movement can experience its strength in struggles against attempts to subordinate jobs, wages and democratic rights to profits. The wharfies' victory did not threaten capitalism, but it provided workers with a glimpse of their potential power.

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BOOKS

Ella Baker, Who Would Not Rest for Freedom

by John J. Simon

Joanne Grant, *Ella Baker: Freedom Bound* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.) $24.95, xviii, 270 pp.

[Radical] means facing a system that does not lend itself to your needs and devising means by which you change that system....But one of the guiding principles has to be that we cannot lead a struggle that involves masses of people without identifying with the people and without getting people to understand what their potentials are, what their strengths are.

We won't be free until we've done something to change society.... The only society that can serve the needs of large masses of poor people is a socialist society. —Ella Baker, 1969, 1977

The civil rights movement of the 1960s (the "Movement" to those who enlisted in its struggle) has had a profound, persistent, and ramifying impact on the contemporary American condition. Perhaps only the New Deal and its aftermath are comparable in this century. Its successes, and there were many, included the end of commonplace lynching and the culture of white supremacist violence that defined ordinary life in the South. The Movement broke the bonds of legally sanctioned segregation (although its de facto remains are seen everywhere, North and South). It also spawned a

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John J. Simon has worked in book publishing and broadcasting. He is currently writing a historical novel about post-Second World War radicalism. He thanks Harriet Barlow and the staff of Blue Mountain Center where this was written. *Advisory*: The reviewer is a friend of the author of the book discussed. Reader discretion is suggested.

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black professional and middle class and gave it a measure of electoral and commercial power. But the Movement had little effect on the power relationships between social classes either among African Americans or in the larger national economic realm—from the 1967 Kerner Commission on, studies show an ongoing decline in the economic circumstance of black America as a whole when compared to white America. Finally, the Movement had little success in challenging the fundamental (one might say *fundamentalist*) component of this nation's historical ideological underpinning: white supremacy.

Yet the struggle, as author Joanne Grant—who reported on the Movement for the *National Guardian* and was an early member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)—points out in this vivid and astute biography of Ella Baker, was an exemplary moment. It was one of those rare historical times when social condition, organizational possibility, and the emergence of leadership allowed rural and urban Southern blacks to take a bit of their history into their own hands. The young cadre of the civil rights movement built a broad-based, Crusade-like insurgency that, for the first time since the industrial union organizing drives of the CIO in the 30s, faced down at least a segment of the dominant order. And present at the creation was a slight, well dressed black woman with an exigent gaze, a strong voice, and the conscious will to historical action.

Grant argues that the 60s civil rights movement was neither an accident nor did it spring full blown as from the head of Zeus.[1] Its roots were in response to the suppressive post-Reconstruction "counterrevolution" of the last three decades of the nineteenth century that culminated both in legally prescribed vassalage of former slaves (in the *Plessey v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision mandating segregation), and the legally *abetted* terror of the night-riding Ku Klux Klan and its allies (including ordinary individuals, the private armies of plantation owners and industry, and even local and federal law enforcement personnel). Churches and segregated schools and colleges, the main community infrastructure in the black community, and the ministers and teachers who led them afforded a small measure of protection and fostered a habit of collective self-help that dated back to slavery. Later they provided the necessary social underpinning for struggles from Montgomery to Mississippi.

This was the world into which Ella Baker was born in 1903 in Norfolk, Virginia, the daughter of a waiter working on the overnight ferry to Washington, D.C. Baker's family was of the black lower

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middle class in income, culture, and aspiration: her grandfather was a founder of the local Negro church; female relatives devoted themselves to charitable works; there was no question that young Ella would be educated.

The First World War brought a multitude of African Americans from the rural South to better-paid industrial jobs in the North. In uptown Manhattan a black metropolis emerged and with it the Harlem Renaissance, a flowering of literary, artistic and intellectual life—and protest. Ella Baker came to this New York where she worked as a reporter for Negro newspapers and as a community activist. It was the eve of the Depression, but for Harlem times were already perilous. As the exhilaration of the 20s gave way to the hard realities of the 30s, Baker found her world view transformed when a friend said, "Look, Ella, a society can break down and the individual is the victim of the breakdown, rather than the cause of it." "It wasn't an easy lesson for me to learn...," she later said, "but it was out of this context that I began to explore the area of ideology and theory regarding social change."

As Grant recounts it, the next three decades saw Baker's life follow a trajectory both of activism and growing political insight. In Harlem she worked to build consumer cooperatives, along with Ernestine Rose marshaled support to force the New York Public Library to hire its first Negro, and worked as a project supervisor for the New Deal Works Progress Administration. An article she wrote for *The Crisis*, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) magazine edited by W. E. B. Du Bois, exposing the treatment of black domestic servants by their white employers, brought her to the attention of future Harlem Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. and the NAACP's leadership, whose staff she joined as an organizer in 1941. The NAACP, founded in 1910, was conceived of as a leadership (that is a hierarchical, top-down) organization, with members, organized into regional branches, usually limited to fund-raising and lobbying. The NAACP's national leadership—sympathetic whites and what co-founder W. E. B. Du Bois called "the talented tenth" (that is the visible professional, intellectual, and entrpreneurial coterie that comprised the back bourgeoisie)—was meant to speak for the organization; indeed, it would claim to speak for all of black America. With its self-affirmed public authority and prestige, it would aim to be heard in the corridors of power. It would be the vehicle, it was argued, to secure

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the rights of all African Americans. The NAACP was given a respectful reception in Congress, among some government officials, and corporate officers, but it had limited success on core issues: white supremacist terror, access to the vote, and the intractable economic and structural issues reflected in the bread and butter concerns of ordinary people.

Rapidly rising to the position of Director of Branches, the senior organizing post in the NAACP, Ella Baker traveled North and South with characteristic energy reviving moribund branches, recruiting new members, and energizing fund-raising. During the Second World War, Baker supported U.S. war goals while pressuring the NAACP leadership to tie anti-colonialism to the ongoing struggle for black liberation at home. But she insistently linked black participation in the war effort to the struggle at home. To a nationwide radio audience she said, "The fight for democracy for Negro Americans is not limited to Negroes. It is a fight for all Americans.... [The NAACP] has battled to save black America's body, but it also battles to save black America's soul." And, "America cannot hope to lead the peoples of the world to freedom, justice and equality without achieving for all its own citizens a full measure of these virtues. Hence the fate of the minority groups in America is bound with the fate of the peoples of the world, and the prevalence of human freedom and peace throughout the world will be conditioned by the extent to which democracy and freedom are enjoyed by all Americans...." Baker also championed trade unionism, linking the civil rights struggle to the organization of workers. In most cases she aligned herself with the more militant CIO, which had a better position on race relations than the AF of L craft unions. She supported CIO organizing in non- and semi-skilled industries where blacks were more likely to find employment, often provoking conflict with her superiors.

With the war's end, America's political and industrial leadership moved to stuff the genie of militant unionism and civil rights struggle back into the jar of corporate dominance. Along with most of the trade union movement, the NAACP's traditional leadership fell into line; militants like Baker were out. In the years between the end of her NAACP employment and the civil rights movement of the 60s, Baker worked for causes as varied as tenants' and consumers' rights, the National Cancer Society, and the Urban League. But by the mid 50s, in the wake of the Supreme Court school desegregation decision and the Montgomery bus boycott, Baker was organizing

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rallies, raising money for the newly formed Southern Christian Leadership Congress (SCLC), and discussing strategy with A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin, as well as with E.D. Nixon, Anne Braden, and Virginia and Clifford Durr, the last three alumni(ae) of the anti-racist struggles of the New Deal left. Baker worked with Martin Luther King, Jr. and the other leaders of SCLC but was critical of what she saw as their failure to engage and empower the large numbers of people King so successfully exhorted to go into the streets. Baker opposed the use of demonstrators as mere cannon fodder, arguing that the dynamic between rank and file and leadership should be a central concern. Later, during the planning of the 1964 Freedom Summer, when some in the Movement saw the presence of whites as merely a device to insure national attention—and a measure of protection for activists and local people—Baker, along with much of the student leadership, successfully argued for the full participation of the Northern volunteers.

In 1960, following the first Southern student lunch counter sit-ins, Baker urged King and Ralph Abernathy to get behind the students, which they did, along with the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Congress on Racial Equality. She helped organize the first of a series of meetings that led to the establishment of an independent organization for the young activists: the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). When King and others sought to annex SNCC as the student arm of SCLC, Baker backed the by-now irrepressible students, rejecting entreaties from liberals as well as from King to hold the students in check; she said "it was useless to put the brakes on, because it was enthusiasm unleashed—an overflow of a dam that had been pent up for years and it had to run its course." At this point she and King's group parted ways.

Baker raised money for the newly-formed SNCC, advised from behind the scenes, spoke at meetings, and, perhaps most consequentially, identified and encouraged the newly emergent leaders: Bob Moses, Chuck McDew, Jane Stembridge, Bob Zellner, Roberta Yancey, Mary King, Connie Curry, and James Foreman, to name a few. Perhaps even more important, she knew, remembered, and *listened to* the people of countless small towns in southwest Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, and in six counties of Mississippi. In this, she set an example for SNCC organizers. In turn, local communities responded to them, protected them, and provided them with food and a place to sleep, not to mention the bodies to mount the

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demonstrations and fill the jails. In the years before the 1964 Freedom Summer in Mississippi, SNCC moved into some of the toughest Klan and White Citizen's Councils areas. Money was short, but the lessons of community engagement, of popular empowerment that Baker advocated were crucial. Despite financial and organizational shortcomings (that she struggled to alleviate), SNCC seemed always able to find decisive local community support in the face of arrests, beatings, and bombings.

There are good histories of the 1964 Freedom Summer and of the civil rights era as well.[2] All too often, however, that time has been depicted sentimentally, as a triumph of America's so-called core values. This is not so in Grant's compelling account, nor was it seen that way contemporaneously. Day-to-day, Baker and her young SNCC comrades saw the bankruptcy of the liberal consensus: they championed independent political action through the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) and learned a lesson when that "most dangerous man," auto workers' union leader Walter Reuther, sold them out for a few inedible crumbs from Lyndon Johnson at the Democratic convention that summer (shortly thereafter Johnson sold out the rest of America in Southeast Asia—with Reuther's support). Partly as a consequence of the MFDP experience and the Vietnam war, advisors Baker, Anne Braden, Howard Zinn, and the SNCC organizing staff moved publicly to a more radical perspective that used class as well as race as analytic and strategic tools; the state was seen no longer as a guarantor of justice, nor was it perceived as offering a democratic arena with a level playing field. Perhaps James Foreman put it best in a rousing speech after SNCC demonstrators were beaten in front of the State Capitol in Montgomery, Alabama in the aftermath of the 1965 Selma march, "If we can't sit at the table of democracy, we'll knock the fucking legs off."

As the 60s wound down, so did SNCC, its staff either burnt out or drawn to other pursuits. In any event, changed political circumstance arrested the radical and radicalizing gust that had whistled across the South. Ella Baker returned North where she pursued a hectic speaking schedule and later worked with Joanne Grant on the documentary film *Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker.*[3] In the 70s, Baker was active in increasingly more militant independent political action: she worked with the radical lawyer Arthur Kinoy on the development of a leftist third party, spoke for the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee, campaigned for freedom for Angela Davis, and joined the Charter Group for a Pledge of Conscience, a New York community-based

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activist organization, along with radicals Jane McManus, Annette Rubinstein, and Annie Stein. Baker told Grant the civil rights endeavor had become "a struggle for a different kind of society which will reject, if necessary, the present system." Baker's life of principled engagement was always premised on her faith in ordinary people, for whom, after all, the struggle was fought; her advocacy of socialism was a logical consequence of her belief in their historical empowerment. Ella Baker died in 1986.

Joanne Grant's *Ella Baker: Freedom Bound* is a powerful retelling of Ella Baker's life, but it is also a thoughtful and revealing narrative of the civil rights movement she did so much to mold. Grant gives us history—her chronicle of events and movements is clear, informative, and authoritative—but the book's power is in the sympathetic and moving portraits she paints of Baker, the young students, and the people of the South who challenged fear to make a bit of their own history in their own time. Joanne Grant's book needs to be read by those too young to remember those times—and those too likely to forget.

NOTES

1. Much writing on the civil rights movement neglects its historical background. Noteworthy exceptions are: Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 1996, and Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990,* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1984).
2. For accounts of the 1964 Freedom Summer and for the history of the 1960s civil rights movement in general see: Sally Belfrage, *Freedom Summer,* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia), 1990; Anne Braden, "The Southern Freedom Movement in Perspective," *Monthly Review,* vol. 17 no. 3, pp. 1-92, 1965; Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963,* (New York: Simon & Schuster), 1988 and *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-65,* New York: (Simon & Schuster), 1998; James Foreman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries,* (Washington, D.C.: Open Hand), 1985; Mary King, *Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement,* (New York: William Morrow), 1987; and Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists,* (Boston: Beacon Press), 1964.
3. The film continues to be widely used in schools and colleges. It is available for rental from First Run Features, 153 Waverly Place, New York, NY 10014, telephone (212) 243-0600.

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"Postmodern Marxism:" A Critique

by Christopher Rude

Roger Burbach, Orlando Nunez, and Boris Kagarlitsky *Globalization and Its Discontents: The Rise of Postmodern Socialisms* (Chicago: Pluto Press, 1997), 196 pp., $17.95.

Globalization and Its Discontents is a prime example of the recent fashionable tendency among leftwing intellectuals to design "neo-Marxist" or "post-Marxist" theories. The authors of this book identify their theoretical speculations as "postmodern Marxism." A special feature of their contribution to the fad is the emphasis they place on globalization. *Globalization and Its Discontents* contains a descriptive account of some of the major developments of late twentieth century world capitalism Thus, there are chapters on the crisis of Western values, globalization, and current developments in the Third World, the United States and post-Communist Russia. Although the authors are not in full agreement on all matters discussed, Burbach, Nunez, and Kagarlitsky do share a common theoretical perspective on the nature of world capitalism today, and they agree on a particular political project. Their common theoretical perspective and political project is built around two assumptions. First, like others in the post-Marxist tradition, Burbach, Nunez, and Kagarlitsky contend that the demise of Soviet communism has left traditional Marxism in complete disarray, that since the "decisive historic event of the late twentieth century is the collapse of communism and the triumph of Western capitalism," "the Marxist project for revolution launched by the Communist Manifesto is dead" (p,142). Second, the authors contend that as a result of large "state-

Christopher Rude has a background in Wall Street and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. He is a graduate student in Economics at the New School for Social Research.

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less" translational industrial, commercial, and financial corporations, the world economy has been "globalized." With their first premise clearly predisposing them to reject the tenets of traditional Marxism, the authors argue that the globalization of the world economy under the multinationals' aegis has (a) greatly diminished the power of the nation state, (b) largely dissolved the old imperialist hierarchies, and (c) brought about a cessation of class conflict throughout the world. The nation and nation-state are obsolete as centers for political action and irrelevant as units of political, social, and economic analysis because they have been replaced by a "globalized translational economy." A "universalization of the periphery" has also abolished the boundaries between the imperialist powers in the center of the world economy and the dominated social formations in the periphery. Finally, the global dominance of the multinationals has left the working classes fragmented and disorganized throughout the world, and the tension between capital and labor has been removed from the center of the world economy as a result.

With a class-based opposition to world capitalism no longer viable,presumably opposition cannot come from within the system but only from without, and non-economic, cultural issues are pushed to the forefront. The goal is no longer to overthrow world capitalism in an anticapitalist revolution as in the traditional Marxist model, as much as it is to leave capitalism behind by slowly creating a new post-capitalist culture and economy in capitalism's place, even while the "globalized" capitalist system remains intact. For the authors, three different, but overlapping, social forces are already moving along the necessary postmodern, postcapitalist path: (a) "globalization's discontents," (b) today's "social" movements, and (c) the "postmodern economies."

"Globalization's discontents," the authors' term for an assortment of "anti-systemic" social forces (ethnic movements based on race and nationality, Islamic fundamentalism, and participants in recent spontaneous urban rebellions, epitomized by the 1992 L.A. riot), is supposed to be shaking "capitalism at its roots." The social movements "are the major ideological protagonists of the postmodern societies." The representatives of these movements and organizations—women's, ethnic rights, gay and lesbian, disabled, Indians, environmentalists, etc.—all demand fundamental changes so that humanity can be liberated and free from all forms of exploitation. As a result, "most of the values of domination and exploitation that have been at the core of Western civilization are now under siege" (p. 38). Taking advan-

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tage of a major crisis in Western values, the social movements thus are creating a new "post modern" culture to replace the West's decaying "culture of power." In this quest, an active "deconstruction" of modernity's culture of domination and exploitation is giving way to a new "individuality" that will displace modernity's possessive individualism and its associated drive for accumulation and power to be replaced by the emergent "postmodern" culture is a multiracial, multigender, and multicultural "polycentrism."

The postmodern economy will presumably consist of (1) the informal economy of street vendors, flea markets, petty family businesses, and even garbage scavengers, (2) weak industries, like steel and airline companies, that big capital sells off to the workers because these industries no longer reap high profits, and (3) the technical and skilled people in the developed world who are spun off by corporate downsizing who will nowsubcontract their services to the big "globalized" capitalists. In this way a new and improved economy will evolve, the same way that capitalism supposedly emerged from within feudalism. That being the case, there is no need to seize state power to make the postcapitalist revolution. While the rebellion of globalization's discontents steadily weakens the multinationals' authority, the social movements and the participants in the postmodern economies are already creating the postmodern, postcapitalist culture and economy from below, in the spaces that globalization and the crisis of Western values have opened up on capitalism's margins, outside the state's purview.

The book has two major shortcomings: the diagnosis as well as the prognosis are highly problematic. The weakness of the socialist left today is very real, but to argue that the demise of the Soviet Union explains the left's current predicament is myopic and self-defeating, for the left's current problems are deeper and more complex than the attention to this one event. Furthermore, their globalization thesis strips the multinationals and the world market from their socio-historical context. Their approach turns globalization into the supreme causal factor of today's social and economic phenomenon. In doing so, the class nature of the underlying socio-historical realities are in effect ignored.Class and class-conflict are removed from their purview right from the start. In the reliance on globalization as the major, if not exclusive, causal factor, the sources of motion of capitalism are ignored: the incessant drive of accumulation, competition of capitals, and class struggle.

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It is ironic that the authors turn their backs on Marxism when events such as the worldwide spread of excess capacity and severe financial crises (notably Southeast Asia these days) demonstrate the validity of Marxist analysis. Instead, the authors spin fanciful theories about postmodern economics.

The authors not only eliminate class conflict. They also do away with the state. The nation state has presumably been replaced by a "translational global economy." The simple fact is that the capitalists need and use the nation state. This is especially so for capital in the states that are at the center of the economic system. These states are not any more or less "powerful" than before, even though the hierarchical status in the imperialist network has changed some. Throughout the history of capitalism the role of the state has changed from time to time, influenced by changes in economic conditions and the strength of pressures from below. Among the new conditions in the past half century has been the decolonization of the periphery. To deal with that change (and meanwhile provide even greater opportunities for foreign investment and markets for the multinationals) the central powers now have such innovations as the World Bank and the I.M.F. The latter are not substitutes for the nation states of big capital. Rather, their job is to serve the interests of the major national centers of capital. Nor has the power of the nation states at the center been weakened in the face of the spiraling internationalization of finance.In fact, since this internationalization is associated with speculation and extensive risk taking, the financial system has become increasingly fragile, calling in turn for a *more* active, interventionist state to protect the banks and the money markets.

If the rise of the multinational corporation has not brought about the cessation but instead the universalization of class struggle, if today's neo-liberal state remains a capitalist class state, and if, finally, the imperialist structures are still largely intact, then the suggestion of Burbach, Nunez, and Kagarlitsky that the social movements, "globalization's discontents," and the "postmodern economies" are already creating an entirely new, freer society within the very pores of a "globalized" world capitalism itself is a dangerously misleading illusion. The women's, gay, lesbian, and ethnic rights movements have indeed acted as the "major ideological protagonists" of social change in recent years. By showing just how varied and subtle oppression can be, these social movements have both broadened the left's political agenda and, by exposing many blind spots, transformed the left's total world view. But if an emphasis on

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the specificity and uniqueness of different kinds of oppression is one of "identity" politics' major strengths, it is a major weakness as well. Deliberately partial and self-limiting, the social movements can at best mount partial, limited rebellions, without challenging directly or indirectly the rule of capital.

Even more serious is the authors' emergent "postmodern polycentrism" and its mistrust of universals. To be sure, all forms of racial, gender, ethnic and cultural chauvinism must be fought against. But in their rush to embrace a multicultural polycentrism, the authors appear to have lost a concern for universal principles altogether. Suspecting that logic, reason, scientific rationality, democracy, human rights, freedom, etc. might be all expressions of the West's "culture of power," the authors fall into a dangerously nihilist relativism and so lose their ethical and political bearings. In doing so, they become susceptible to the moral opportunism exemplified by their belief that "globalization's discontents" might be their allies on the flimsy basis that Western capitalism's enemies are their friends. For the forces included under the term "globalization's discontents" are not necessarily anti-systemic or progressive. Urban criminality is but a symptom of capitalism's brutality, while, as recent events in Bosnia and Rwanda show, movements based on race and ethnicity can just as easily produce genocide as liberation. Rather than constituting a new "postmodern economy," as Burbach, Nunez, and Kagarlitsky would have us believe, the growth of the "underground" economy in both the developed and the underdeveloped worlds, the appearance of worker-owned enterprises in dying industries, and the spread of subcontracting and contingent cottage employment in the wake of corporate downsizing are all symptoms of the economic crisis that is taking place today under capitalism's rule. And no matter how valiantly the individuals, peoples, and even whole nations that have been cast off by world capitalism try to defend themselves against the blows of economic crises, their efforts will have limited success as long as capitalism and its laws of motion remain in the driver's seat.

Lacking a grasp of capitalism as a universalized class system, Burbach, Nunez, and Kagarlitsky turn to reformism. To foster the evolution of the postmodern economies, they place "individual initiative, creativity, and self-reliance at the center of the new project," (156) advocating a "new economic philosophy" that harnesses the individual drive to progress and get ahead with a broader political ideology that advances the common good. Praise for laissez faire

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capitalism quickly follows. "In contrast to the [actually existing] socialist economies, the genius of emergent postmodern economies is that they are not the creation of the state. They are based on individual or group initiative" (157). Without indulging in an extensive analysis of these fine-sounding words, the point is that there is no substance to them if we are concerned with removing the poverty, insecurity, and misery of the overwhelming majority of the world's population.

In short, the author's indulge in spinning out theories which may still be fashionable in some intellectual circles, but are far removed from the real world. This book is only a year old, but by the fall of 1998 already seems as dated as "the end of the ideology" or the Hoola-hoop. The authors faith in the triumph of "global" capitalism is no longer shared even at *Businessweek* or *The Financial Times.*

Rosa Luxemburg in a letter to a friend on May 2, 1917

What am I reading? For the most part, natural science: geography of plants and animals. Only yesterday I read why the warblers are disappearing from Germany. Increasingly systematic forestry, gardening and agriculture are, step by step destroying all natural nesting and breeding places: hollow trees, fallow land, thickets of shrubs, withered leaves on the garden grounds. It pained me so when I read that. Not because of the song they sing for people, but rather it was the picture of the silent, irresistible extinction of these defenseless little creatures which hurt me to the point that I had to cry. It reminded me of a Russian book which I read while still in Zurich, a book by Professor Sieber about the ravage of the redskins in North America. In exactly the same way, step by step, they have been pushed from their land by civilized men and abandoned to perish silently and cruelly.

—The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg, Stephen Bonner ed. (Atlantic Highlands New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993) pp. 202-03.

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The Canadian Auto Workers: An Inspirational Story

by James Rinehart

Sam Gindin, *The Canadian Auto Workers: The Birth and Transformation of a Union* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1995) pp., 289, $19.95.

This book is much more than an illustrated history of the Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW) from its emergence to its separation from the United Auto Workers (UAW) and developments subsequent to the split. The narrative is shaped by the quest to explain why the UAW in the United States declined, while the Canadian auto workers were able to build an independent, progressive union. The explanation emphasizes the distinct economic and political conditions in Canada and the United States, as well as organizational, strategic, and ideological differences within each wing of the union.

In the years of union formation, events to the south—sit-down strikes and burgeoning union membership—inspired Canadian workers. The UAW established a beachhead in Canada with the 1937 strike of General Motors' (GM) Oshawa plant, but a virulently anti-labor Ontario government and the absence of legislation like the Wagner Act made it easy for the company to refuse to recognize the union. The drive for industrial unionism stalled until after the outbreak of the war.

During the war, union membership in Canada doubled, and major strike waves were driven by the demand for union recognition.

James Rinehart teaches sociology at the University of Weston Ontario. He is the author of *The Tyranny of Work: Alienation and the Labour Process* and co-author of *Just Another Car Factory? Lean Production and Its Discontents.*

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The soaring popularity of the social democratic Cooperative Commonwealth Federation Party (CCF), forerunner of the New Democratic Party (NDP), pulled the two bourgeois parties to the center-left. A strike at the Ford Windsor plant, which featured an auto blockade of city streets, won the dues check-off, and in 1944 the federal government enacted a labor law similar to the Wagner Act. American auto workers also struck in record numbers despite the support of their leaders—and the Communist Party—for the no-strike pledge, a ban on overtime pay, and the attempt to win gains through technical presentations to government boards. The retreat from the strike weapon discredited the leadership (and the CP) in the eyes of workers, moved the union away from mobilizing workers, and reinforced centralization and professionalization. The Canadian wing of the UAW, as well as a large portion of union CPers, opposed the no-strike pledge. This and the later struggles for union recognition and security gave a fighting momentum to the Canadians that had been largely lost in the United States by the end of the Second World War.

After the Second World War pattern bargaining under Walter Reuther brought wage and benefit gains, but working conditions were treated as less important, and management-rights clauses solidified corporate control over the shop floor. (In these regards the two union wings were similar.) Purges of the left in the United States weakened the union, which lost experienced activists, diverted energies from organizing the South, and further stifled internal dissent. Once characterized by ideological differences and factions, and strong, independent locals, the American wing was transformed into a single-party organization with centralized decision making.

Purges of the left in Canada were not nearly as sweeping, and a coalition of left-wing forces in the union and in the union's Canadian Council (CC) kept debate alive and inhibited oligarchy and stagnation. Formed in 1939, the CC is comprised of delegates elected from the locals. The CC gave the membership input into union policy, and was a forum for debate and a haven for the left during the McCarthy years. While the Council's decisions are not binding, Gindin describes it as "the real parliament of the union." A structure like the CC never took hold in the United States

In the 1960s the failure to forge ties with black and anti-war activists and organizations condemned American unions to a steady slide to marginalization. In contrast, the Canadian labor movement gained strength in the 1960s. An illegal strike of postal workers and

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subsequent enabling labor legislation led to the unionization of tens of thousands of public sector workers. The security of auto workers got a shot in the arm with the 1965 Auto Pact, which required the Big Three to produce in Canada as many vehicles as they sold in Canada. (Performance requirements like this are outlawed in free trade agreements.)

During the 1970s the strike rate in Canada, legal and illegal, soared to record levels. There were 59 wildcats at GM Canada, and De Havilland workers struck for an incredible 468 days. The Budd stamping plant was hit by 150 wildcats between 1976 and 1979. In the mid-1970s, unions organized the first national one-day work stoppage in North America to protest government wage controls, but the UAW was virtually the only union that successfully defied wage controls through aggressive collective bargaining. Layoffs and plant shutdowns spurred the Canadian UAW to lead demonstrations and plant occupations. These struggles, Gindin emphasizes, prepared the union for future battles by demonstrating the value of direct action.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, when neoliberal governments and the corporate demand for concessions challenged labor's ability to defend gains won in the past, the U.S. labor movement was in no condition to resist. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures show that virtually every union member in the States made concessions in the 1980s. Gindin recognizes massive layoffs in the auto industry made it difficult for the UAW to avoid losses, but it was the refusal to fight that was the real disaster.

The Canadian auto workers rejected concessions in principle and beat back the corporate onslaught. The Canadian wing diverged from precedents set in the U.S by establishing a no-concessions fund for strike-bound locals, and by refusing to sign local agreements before contract expiry, which insulated locals from whipsawing tactics. These actions did not produce great contracts, but the companies retreated from their demands for concessions. In the 1984 GM negotiations, the U.S. UAW settled with no gains (narrowly ratified by workers). When Canada's turn came, UAW president Owen Bieber, wanting to save face with his home membership, urged GM to limit its offer. After a 13 day strike, which caused thousands of layoffs in plants in the United States, the union won substantial gains. It was Bieber's interference in these negotiations (captured in a National Film Board of Canada video entitled "Final Offer"), along with his

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surrender to concessions, that set in motion decisions leading to separation and the formation of the CAW.

What accounts for the divergent positions on concessions? As in the States, the Canadian manufacturing sector was devastated by plant closures and layoffs in the period immediately preceding and during the height of concessions bargaining. However, the auto industry in Canada was not hit nearly as hard as in the States. Between 1974 and 1980, the UAW in the States lost 200,000 members, while the Canadian wing gained over 15,000 (due in part to an eight dollar an hour labor cost advantage arising from the lower value of the Canadian dollar and lower company contributions to health care insurance). Gindin doesn't give this differential bargaining leverage much explanatory weight, emphasizing instead factors internal to the union. Simply put, the UAW in the States, but not in Canada, had lost the capacity to take on the auto makers. That both the Canadian leadership and rank and file were prepared to fight back, Gindin argues, was a result of previous, continuous struggles and nationalist ideology. "American nationalism was the nationalism of the dominant power in the world, and it tended to tie the union to establishment goals," explains Gindin. Canadian nationalism entails a desire for independence (from American influence), a rejection of made-in-America decisions, and a skepticism of American-owned companies. By reinforcing the conflicting interests of "them and us," these attitudes are conducive to militant actions. (I wouldn't entirely discount this explanation, but one wonders why Canadian nationalism operates so selectively. Why didn't other unions in Canada, like the steelworkers, United Food and Commercial Workers, and Energy and Paper Workers secede, and why, as discussed below, have they adopted a less adversarial approach to labor-management relations?)

In the 10 years after the split, the CAW lost nearly 30,000 members through plant closures, labor-replacing technology, and the implementation of lean production techniques. Despite this, membership grew by 50 percent to almost 200,000 (UAW membership in the States dropped by one-third during the same period). Most new members came from mergers, as the union incorporated groups such as airline employees, railway workers, and fishers. From an auto workers' union concentrated in central Canada, the CAW now has locals in all regions of the country and has become a general union (auto workers are now a minority). Intent on maintaining a

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coherent national direction and leadership, the national office maintains a key role in all collective bargaining.

There is no other union in North America that can match the bargaining successes of the CAW. This is not to say its aggressive adversarialism has not been tempered on occasion by a pragmatism that produces strategic compromises. Under Bob White the union held the line on standard wage and benefit packages, but it selectively allowed individual plants greater flexibility in negotiating work rules and job classifications, and struck compromises on compulsory overtime and team working. Under Buzz Hargrove the union agreed (after much heated debate in the CC) to support the team concept and other elements of Japanese production management at the GM-Suzuki CAMI plant, in exchange for the company's agreement to operate with a union. However, the adversarial bent of the union emerged with a vengeance, as CAMI workers in 1992 staged the first-ever strike in North America of a Japanese transplant or joint venture.

The social unionism of the CAW is manifested through building women's shelters, health clinics, child care facilities, and co-op housing; spearheading anti-FTA and anti-NAFTA coalitions; organizing a series of citywide work stoppages and mass demonstrations to protest the policies of the current Progressive Conservative government in Ontario; forging ties with South African, Mexican, and South and Central American labor movements; establishing a social justice fund to support progressive international projects; and broadening the scope of collective bargaining to incorporate demands that benefit the community (e.g., demands for reduced work time to create job openings).

The CAW research department produces policy papers, pamphlets, newsletters, research monographs, and news releases. It trains shop floor workers to lead discussions in their locals on a range of issues. At its always-busy Education Centre on Lake Huron, union members take courses in everything from corporate restructuring and negotiating strategies to labor history, human rights, and women's issues, all of which are aimed at strengthening what Gindin calls the union's "culture of resistance."

Among private sector (international) unions the CAW is relatively isolated, not only because its secession upset the leaders of international unions, but also because these unions favor less adversarial labor-management relations and policies, and restrict political action to steadfast support for the NDP. Not long after the

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Ontario NDP's first-ever election victory, the Party suspended collective bargaining and imposed concessions on public sector employees. An enraged CAW leadership refused to endorse the Party in its (lost) bid for re-election, thus deepening divisions within the labor movement.

Like other social democratic parties, the NDP has moved a long way to the right. Consider a passage from the founding manifesto of the NDP's CCF ancestor: "We aim to replace the present capitalist system with its inherent injustice and inhumanity by a social order from which the domination and exploitation of one class by another will be eliminated, in which economic planning will supersede unregulated private enterprise and competition, and in which genuine self-government based upon economic equality will be possible."

Gindin would like to see the CAW resurrect these ideals by becoming what he calls a movement union. This would involve putting union resources into building an extra-parliamentary social movement and ultimately forming a political party that challenges corporate power and promotes an alternative vision of society that can move and unite people. This is a tall order indeed. Apart from the usual obstacles to the realization of this ideal, the deep divisions within the Canadian labor movement severely limit the likelihood of a successful union-led political mobilization.

In a period when labor movements around the world are losing political influence, bargaining power, and members, this excellent book relates an engrossing and inspirational story. Sam Gindin is well positioned to tell it, having played a key role in union affairs since he joined the union in 1947 to start a research department. As Chief Researcher and Assistant to three union presidents, Gindin has been and remains one of the major architects of union policies and strategies.

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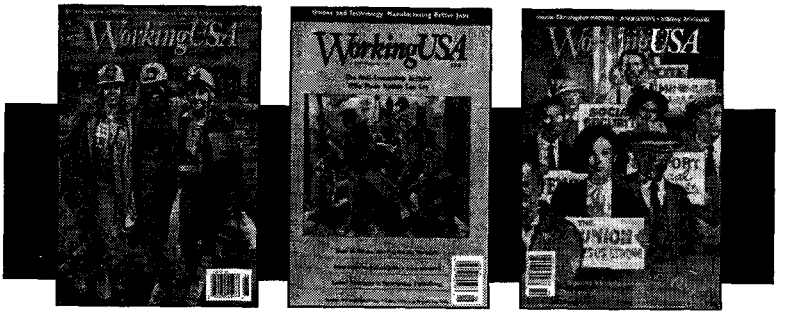

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(Continued from inside front cover)

struggle since 1995. Our visitors gave us a compelling history of the struggle and its aftermath.

In September of 1995 the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company locked out 500 workers who refused to cross a picket line set up by dockers fighting lay-offs and casualization. That lock-out set off a prolonged dispute, and though the action ended this year without the dockers achieving their immediate objectives, it promises to have more lasting effects in other ways.

The most remarkable thing about the Liverpool dispute is that, while the press coverage in Britain itself was very muted, the dockers' action had reverberations throughout the world. A very wide solidarity network developed, with support for the dockers in, among many other countries, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Japan, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, the USA, and New Zealand.

Today, the Liverpool dockers are continuing to develop that international network, and they recently sent us an update on their activities. This included a statement about the "Initiative Factory" they've established, which seeks "to build the widest possible alliances," not only with labor organizations but also with academic organizations and labor studies programs. Among the things they want to do is to establish an international research facility, and especially "a historical archive of the 1995-98 dispute and its impacts in each country, studying contemporary developments around dockworkers' struggles worldwide, the impact of globalisation on the working class and responses to this. The archive...would encourage the building of electronic links, which over time could be supplemented by physical exchanges." Among the materials included in this archive would be "histories of working class disputes or materials relating to current disputes, discussions on globalisation and the impacts on the working class movements...." They also propose "to set up international study circles with like minded groups in the communities, trade unions, colleges/universities, adult education sector."

These are all interesting and creative initiatives. (Anyone wanting more information can contact the Initiative Factory, Bishop Goss School, Everton, Liverpool, UK. Their email address is dockers@gn.apc.org.) In an increasingly integrated world economy, workers are more and more interconnected. Their various conditions and struggles are often directly related to each other and, even when not directly connected, workers at very great geographical distances from each other, and in very different economic and cultural conditions, increasingly share a common experience.

Naturally, in the case of dockers, at the heart of international trade, the interconnections are very immediate and obvious, and so are the opportunities for generating solidarity among dockers elsewhere who

(Continued on page 27)

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